OCTOBER 35 Cents

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

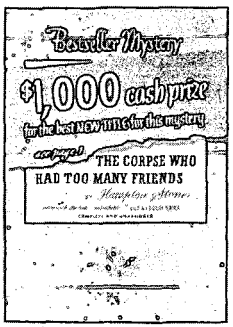
Debt of Honor by CORNELL WOOLRICH

JUANITA SHERIDAN MARGERY SHARP JAMES YAFFE

LICENSED FOR PERSONAL USE
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

$1,000 can be yours if you

submit the best new title for the current Bestseller Mystery



THE CORPSE WHO HAD TOO MANY FRIENDS

by HAMPTON STONE

(Now at your newsstand)

Mercury Publications is offering $1,000 for the most original and suitable title for this exciting Hampton Stone mystery. All you have to do to enter is read the book and submit your title in accordance with the simple contest instructions on page one of "The Corpse Who Had Too Many Friends." The contest is open to everyone except employees of Mercury Publications and their families. The judges will be the editors of Bestseller Mysteries and their decision will be final.

A fast-paced detective thriller, "The Corpse Who Had Too Many Friends" is a book you will enjoy for its excitement, puzzle and characterization. In addition, you'll be interested in a surprising fact about author Hampton Stone that the editors will reveal for the first time. Reserve a copy of "The Corpse Who Had Too Many Friends" at your newsstand now to assure your chance to enter the contest. You'll like this story about murder and merrymaking, and a man who had one friend too many—the one who killed him . . .

MERCURY PUBLICATIONS *471 Park Avenue New York 22 N.Y.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

including **BLACK MASK MAGAZINE**

DETECTIVE STORIES

DEBT OF HONOR	*Cornell Woolrich*	3
THE CROOKED FIGURES	*Phyllis Bentley*	65
THE DOG AND THE HORSE	*Voltaire*	99
MOM SHEDS A TEAR	*James Yaffe*	110
THE DIPPING OF THE CANDLEMAKER	*Hayden Howard*	126

SUSPENSE NOVELETTE

THERE ARE NO SNAKES IN HAWAII	*Juanita Sheridan*	24

BLACK MASK MAGAZINE

PAYMENT IN FULL	*Dion Henderson*	55

EQMM "FIRST"

SOCRATES SOLVES A MURDER	*Brèni James*	74

GAMBLING STORY

THE BIG TIPPER	*Hartzell Spence*	81

CRIME STORIES

THE MARK OF THE FLAIL	*L. J. Beeston*	15
THE MAN WHO FEARED THE WATER	*Margery Sharp*	89
DUELLO	*Stephen Barr*	107

EQMM "SPECIAL"

BANQUET AND A HALF	*Lee Hays*	102
DETECTIVE DIRECTORY	*Robert P. Mills*	124

The best of the new and the best of the old

PUBLISHER: *Joseph W. Ferman* **EDITOR:** *Ellery Queen*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 24, No. 4, Whole No. 131; OCTOBER 1954. Published monthly by Mercury Publications, Inc., at 35¢ a copy. Annual subscription $4.00 in U.S.A. and possessions, Canada and the Pan American Union; $5.00 in all other countries. Publication office, Concord, N. H. Editorial and General offices; 471 Park Ave., New York 22, N. Y. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Concord, N. H. under the act of March 3, 1879.

Copyright, 1954, by Mercury Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U. S. A.

ROBERT P. MILLS, *Managing Editor*
CHARLES ANGOFF, *Associate Editor*
GLORIA LEVITAS, *Assistant Editor*
CONSTANCE DI RIENZO, *Editorial Secretary*
HOWARD K. PRUYN, *Production Manager*
MILDRED BARISH, *Editorial Assistant*
GEORGE SALTER, *Art Director*
Cover Painting by EMSH

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Outstanding New Mystery Books

The most powerful novel

Ellery Queen

has ever written. A chilled-steel plot, enacted by New England village-folk, whose emotional mass-frenzy in face of brutal murder is quelled by a wise old judge and his ex-army Intelligence nephew in scenes that highlight a peril present to every American.

THE GLASS VILLAGE

At all bookstores • *$3.50*

LITTLE BROWN & CO., Boston 6

ISAAC ASIMOV

Professor of Biochemistry
Leading science fiction author

"Biochemical research, in common with most forms of scientific investigation, has its strong element of detective work; with misbehaving atoms and molecules taking the place of thugs and corpses. It is vicariously pleasant, therefore, after a day of wondering why Chemical X insisted on behaving so peculiarly under Conditions Y and Z, to sit back and watch a fictional detective go through analogous mental turmoil.

"As a purveyor of such pleasure, ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE ranks high."

IT'S SMART TO READ MYSTERIES
IT'S ALSO GOOD FOR YOUR PEACE OF MIND

COLLECTORS!

Limited quantities are still available of all issues of EQMM from January 1952 through the current number except for the following issues: August, September 1953 and February 1954.

While the supply lasts, copies can be obtained from this address, postpaid, at 35¢ each.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

471 Park Avenue New York 22, N. Y.

TO A BOOK PUBLISHER:

Do you have trouble allocating the limited budget for your mystery books?

Then, use this page to help sell your mystery titles. The rate is low — only $77 per quarter-page unit; and the market is large and responsive.

The closing date for the December issue is October 1

EQMM

471 Park Avenue New York 22, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A detective's toughest decision: honor vs. professional integrity . . .

DEBT OF HONOR

by CORNELL WOOLRICH

TO THE OTHERS IN THE BACK ROOM, Second-Grade Detective Clinton Sturgess said, "So long, fellows — see you tomorrow." He went down the hall, past the sergeant's desk, out of the precinct house and into the velvety softness of an August dusk. He went around the corner to the garage, got his old car out. He swung it up the ramp to the street, stopped long enough to light a cigarette, exhaled an enjoyable "Aahh!" and started homeward, whistling.

It was a swell night. It was a swell life. He was 35, had a nice wife and a nice kid, he was a second-grader, and he wasn't stopping there. He had it all lined up before him, step by step: first-grade, lieutenant, captain, inspector. Still remote those steps were, but not unattainable. The way lay plain before him, with odds just stiff enough to try his mettle, and the rewards generous to a fault. It was a swell night. It was a swell life.

He was out on the lake shore drive now, with its lights curving around before him in a long vista and the lake gray-violet in the twilight. His rented little bungalow was a little far out from the city, in a district not yet fully built up; but it was cheaper out there and you got more for your money.

He was whistling *My Blue Heaven.* It was old but it stayed with him, and the words in his mind fitted his contentment.

A turn to the right —
A little white light,

He made the turn (but it was to the left) and climbed the steep grade that led to their house. The development was called Lakeview Heights because it was strung along the top of this bluff. He parked at the curb instead of backing into the garage because he'd decided to take his family to the movies. He sounded the horn, and the porch light went on and they both came out in a flurry, his wife just to the lower step, the kid flying out all the way to swing from his neck as he stepped from the car and caught her.

The kid was pretty. Everybody said so. She'd been on loan to them from heaven for seven years now, and each time he could see the place she'd come from just by looking at her.

"Get your things ready. We're going to the movies."

The flurry became a whirlwind. His

Copyright, 1938, by Cornell Woolrich; originally titled "IOU—One Life."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wife said, "I've got supper waiting for you on the table. We're finished already. Barbara, come in and get your hat."

He turned the car around to face downhill, to save time leaving, and braked once more. The kid came racing out past him a second time as he got up to the porch. "I'll wait for you in the car!" she cried gaily.

"All right — but don't monkey with the horn now."

He wasn't even sitting down yet, he was crouched above a chair in the act of pulling it forward under him, and his wife was passing him a plate across the table. He was in a straight line with the porch door. He happened to turn his head that way, and there was something wrong. There was a blankness out where there shouldn't have been. He could see the opposite side of the street.

His chair cracked over and he was running through the living room to the porch. Behind him a plate shattered on the floor and the S.O.S. of his wife's heels came tapping after him.

He could still hear the whisper of the car's going receding on the hushed night air. No engine. So then he knew what had happened, and the knowledge nearly felled him, like a crowbar across the top of his head, even before he got out to the porch and could see.

Street lamps made it bright all the way down, all the way to where — the lake was. The car was going straight as an arrow. It didn't swerve at all. Its momentum held it gripped too tightly. A little arm was thrust briefly out at the side, then withdrawn again. A sort of gay wave; coasting was fun.

There wasn't a sound behind him. Somehow he knew, without looking, that his wife had fallen senseless there on the walk. But he was already yards down that fearful incline. He ran down that hill like nothing that had ever run down it before.

It was all over so quickly, so soundlessly. He had been gaining on the car, but the foot of the street came too quickly. Horror such as a man sees only once in a lifetime was fleetingly there before his eyes, then gone again. But never quite gone again until the day he'd die. For the car reached Lakeshore Drive, swept across its triple-lane width, unerringly hurtled the pitifully low pedestrian parapet — it was such a new development, and it would have hidden the beauties of the lake to have built it any higher — cleared the barrier almost by the unaided resiliency of its own tires and springs, with a flaring of dust and a crumbling along the top, and was gone from sight.

It was as instantaneous as the exposure of a snapshot. Two of the limestone blocks along the upper tier, a car's width apart, had been knocked out by the wheels, giving a battlement effect. But the spray that had risen on the other side never seemed to finish falling back into place.

There was a screaming of brakes off to one side of him as he darted across the roadway, and some kind of a pitching, swerving beam of light

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flicked at him. Somebody's arrested headlights maybe.

A horrid heaving was there below him as he mounted one of the loosened blocks. The high-posted driveway lights behind him played up a single blister-like bubble formed there in the water, a bubble that refused to burst, that kept renewing itself from below. He didn't bother about his coat. He aimed himself face-forward into those roiling eddies, and as he went down the thought that he couldn't swim was with him, but that didn't matter.

He went in wrong, with a spanking blow across the chest and stomach. He went down a little way, arms groping before him — toward nothing. Then he was being pushed up again, and he didn't know how to make himself go down any farther. He didn't know how not to breathe either, and long before he could get up again he was nothing but a mass of convulsive muscular spasms, drawing in destruction at every inhalation. He broke the surface briefly, but he didn't know how to take advantage of it. He was already dying himself now, as he went under again.

Something swift and safe and sure got him at some point after that. He never knew when, and it drew him backward through water and up into air, air that now hurt as much as water, but didn't kill. Then he was lying there heaving like a bellows, on a tiny lip of soil that protruded at the base of the parapet, and there was a man standing over him, dripping but not spent, looking down at him with a sort of scorn that had no solicitude or consideration to it. The man said, "What the hell did you go in for, if you can't swim?"

Sturgess turned over on his face, supporting himself on his hands, and between spasms of coughing managed to strangle out: "My kid! In a car down there —!"

The man was suddenly gone again. And in a little while, in only the space between two paroxysms of coughing it seemed, she was there again before his eyes, cradled in the man's arms, her face so blue and still in the darkness. From where he lay Sturgess just mutely looked his gratitude, as the stranger climbed up over the parapet still holding her, toward the waiting arms of quickly gathered spectators reaching down to help.

When the inhalator squad had finished, and Sturgess had held her tight to him a minute, with her open-eyed, breathing, he looked around and asked: "Where is he? Where'd he go?"

He saw a car start to glide furtively off in the background. He shouted, "Wait!" and ran directly across the path of its headlights. The car stopped with a poor sort of grace, and the man at the wheel hitched his head in surly inquiry as Sturgess came up alongside. One hand, on the wheel-rim, was bandaged.

Sturgess poised his own two hands downward across the edge of the door, and gratitude was somehow expressed even in the gesture itself. But the man

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inside grated impatiently, "Well, whaddye want?"

It was hard to put into words, especially when it wasn't welcome. All Sturgess could say was, "You don't know what this means —"

The man said with a jeer, a jeer for himself, "I don't know how I come to do it. I never done a thing like that before."

"But isn't there anything I can do? Won't you at least let me have your name?"

The answer was almost venomous. "What d'you care what my name is? I don't go around giving people my name!"

Sturgess would have taken a kick in the teeth from him. His balked gratitude had to find some means of expression, so he gave the man his own name instead.

The stranger just looked at him stolidly. Sturgess couldn't tell if he was bored, or contemptuous. His eyes flicked to Sturgess' fingers, which were folded across the rim of the car door. The meaning was plain: Take your hands off; get away from me.

The car inched away, and Sturgess dropped his hands defeatedly.

"If there's ever anything I can do —" he called out helplessly.

His benefactor stayed in character to the end. A cynical "That's what they all say!" came floating back above the dwindling tail-light.

The reports on the Torrington murder were coming in faster and more promising by the hour. There had been a lull of half a week first, that preliminary lull that the outside world always mistakes for inactivity, even defeat. But they hadn't been idle. They'd been working behind the scenes, in the laboratory, in the Bertillon files, on the weapon-testing range, in the world of the exact sciences. They had built up their man from nothing, with the aid of nap from his suit, body oil from his fingertips, a hundred and one other microscopic things. At the end of half a week they had him, although they had never seen him. They had his height, his weight, his habits, almost the way he walked, and what his blood count was. Now came the time to get him, to pull him out of thin air, the way a magician makes a rabbit appear out of a hat — to match him in the flesh to his preconceived identity.

The murderer had had plenty of time to leave the city during those three and a half days. He had left. They'd expected him to, they'd counted on his doing just that. They cast their net in a great wide loop first, overreaching the farthest possible limits of his flight; for in his own mind he was still safely anonymous. They began to draw the net in by telegraph, by radio, by all the means they had. Too late by a matter of hours he tried to break through. He was recognized, the alarm sent out, the highways blocked off. He turned and fled back again; the chase went into reverse. He plunged back into the sanctuary of the city. The net was drawn in slowly but surely.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yesterday his car had been found, abandoned just inside the city limits, and by that they got his name. It was Murray Forman — there were infinite variations to it, but none of them was of paramount importance. He was guilty of cold-blooded murder, and that was.

Tighter and tighter the noose was pulled. From citywide it narrowed to a single neighborhood, from an entire neighborhood down to a single street. And presently they would have the very house, and then the exact room inside that house and then they'd have him. It was a matter of hours only, fractions of hours. They were old in guile, and remorseless, and their combined intelligences never slept. But singly they were only human beings.

First-Grader Sturgess, of the Homicide Squad, was relieved temporarily at 2 that morning, almost at the zero hour, and sent home subject to immediate recall. He had slept only in snatches for a week past, his reflexes were no longer dependable, and much as he rebelled against it, he recognized the advisability of the respite. The climax might not occur until dawn, in which case he could still be in time for it on his return to duty.

He put his key to the door and let himself into the empty house. The wife and kid were away in the country with relatives for two weeks, and the summer mustiness of rooms that have been shut up tight all day clung to the air. He put on the lights and saw halos around them, from his fatigue.

The image of his girl leaped out at him from the green-gold easel on the radio, and already he was less weary. Just the sight of her likeness was restful. She was still on loan; and now, at twelve, more than a hint of the way she was going to be was apparent. And she was going to be the tops.

He said, "Hello, honey," to her. He said it every time he got back, just as though she were here.

"Your old man's all in," he mourned to her under his breath. He opened the windows first of all, to freshen up the place a little. Then he took off the things that bothered him most, in order — his tie and then his shoes and then his coat. He said to himself, "I'm getting old," but with the complacency that only a man who knows he really isn't can bring to bear on the thought.

He puttered around in his socks a minute or two. He thought, "Where did she keep the cans of salmon, now?" He thought, "I'm too tired to bother." He went in and stood over the bed, sketchily straightened since the last time he'd been in it. He looked at it questioningly. It was too much trouble to pull down that spread. It would take too long — he couldn't wait another minute. He turned slightly, let himself fall back on the bed in a straight line from shoulders to heels, so that his feet kicked up slightly with the fall. The bed sang out threateningly under the impact but held, and before the springs had stopped jarring he was already out of the world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The tapping alone would never have roused him. It was too low, too furtive. It was the sharper note of the bell that brought him up through layers of oblivion into the shallows of awareness. He raised his head from the neck alone, held it erect, let it drop back again of its own weight.

The ring came again, cut short as though no more than a peck had been given the button. The tapping was blurred, like hail or gravel striking on wood. He got up, wavered through the two rooms toward the front door, said sharply, "Who's there?"

The tapping broke off short.

He opened the door and a man was standing there in the dim light. The man acknowledged the opening with a peculiar, warning gesture, a diagonal cut of his hand that held a plea for caution in it.

He seemed to take his right of admission for granted. His hat was low, and Sturgess didn't know him, didn't know why he should. The visitor inserted himself obliquely between Sturgess and the door frame, and then as Sturgess gave ground before him, the man closed the door and sealed it with his own body, pressing himself against the knob.

He pushed his hat higher, but inadvertently, by backing a hand to his forehead as though in unutterable relief. "I thought you'd never open the door," he said. "I saw you come in before."

Sturgess said on a rising inflection that held no anger, yet led the way toward it, "Who are you?"

The man leaning dejectedly against the door — he was starting to sag a little now as if some long-sustained tension had relaxed — sneered: "You don't know me?"

There was memory in that sneer alone, in that characteristic tone that never gave the benefit of the doubt. The man's shoulder blades went a notch lower on the door-seam. "You better know me," he said. And then he jeered, "Or don't you want to?"

His eyes found the picture, rested on it, guessed, came back again with a mocking gleam. But he didn't say anything. He didn't have to. Sturgess knew by now.

He'd never been good at saying things. He said, "You're the fellow, you're the man — the lake, that time." His face lit up with long-stored gratitude, but then the light died again as the man brushed by him, seemed not to see the friendly start Sturgess' hand had made. The man found his own way across the room, pitched into a chair.

There was blood on one side of his face, or rather vestiges of it, a thin dark patina.

Sturgess was awake now. He was frightened too, by some kind of foreknowledge. He ran his tongue across his lower lip, said, "What'd you do, hurt yourself?"

The man lowered his head abruptly, glared challengingly. "No, I didn't hurt myself. A bullet grazed me getting over here. From one of your crowd."

Sturgess was getting whiter by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minute. The other's eyes held him derisively, forcing knowledge on him that he didn't want. "Why don't you ask me why I'm here?"

Sturgess flinched. "Don't tell me anything you're liable to be sorry —" he said quickly.

The man in the chair started to repeat what he'd just said. "Don't you want to find out why I'm —"

"Shut up!" Sturgess shouted.

"No you don't! I've got something coming to me. What're you trying to do — leave an out for yourself, welsh out of it? So that when they come ganging around here in a minute or two — See no evil, hear no evil, eh? Well, you're looking at Murray Forman, and what are you going to do about it?"

Sturgess ran a hand through the bird's-nest tangle of his hair. "My God!" he groaned. "Don't you know who I am?"

"D'you suppose I'd be here if I didn't? You're my trump card, the last one I hold. Somebody else told me who you were that night. I came across your picture in the paper once after that, when you were promoted for running down those cop-killers. It gave your address." He laughed mirthlessly. "It pays to change addresses more often, when you've got debts outstanding."

He looked rested now, fit, compared to Sturgess. His color was high alongside Sturgess' agonized pallor. His pores were dry, not glistening like the other man's.

Sturgess flung the door open, folded it back flat against the wall as if he couldn't get it wide enough. "Get out!" he said in a choked voice. "Get out of here! That's the most I can —"

Forman kept looking at the picture, as though he hadn't heard. He said softly, "Is her hair gold-brown like it looks on there? Is that how she smiles all the time, with a little dent in the middle of her cheek?"

"Get out, you dirty killer!"

"I know how they do; sometimes they slip their arm around your neck from behind your chair, and hug you tight. Sometimes they get down on the floor at your feet and lean their head against your knee, and look up and over at you, backwards. She wouldn't do all that, Sturgess, if it wasn't for me. What's her name, Sturgess?"

"Barbara," said Sturgess limply, and closed the door again very slowly, as though it weighed a ton.

They didn't say anything for a long time — either of them. It seemed like a long time anyway. Forman stayed in the chair, which was the most comfortable one in the room. Sturgess stood against the door.

Forman spoke finally, as matter-of-factly as though they had known each other all their lives. "Gimme a cigarette. Got one on you?"

Sturgess felt absently for his coat pocket without looking up. He didn't have any. Forman must have got up and helped himself from the humidor. The next thing Sturgess noticed he was back in the chair smoking.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sturgess said finally, as though the trivial request had managed to restore his own power of expression, "I'm a police officer, Forman. There isn't anything I can do."

The man in the chair snapped ashes from his cigarette. "You don't have to do a thing. Just let me stay here till the heat cools a little, then you'll turn your back and I'll be gone, the way I came. That's all, and then we're square — quits."

"You struck down and murdered a man in cold blood —"

"That doesn't cancel *your* obligation. I'd already croaked someone long before that night you first came across me. That didn't keep you from accepting your kid's life from my hands, did it? She breathes just as good, her lungs are just as empty of water, her eyes are just as wide open, as if a right guy saved her, aren't they? I didn't argue the right and wrong of it before I went in, did I? You owe me a life —"

("Two lives," Sturgess admitted to himself. It was clever of him, good psychology, not to mention having saved Sturgess himself, to emphasize only the one that really mattered.)

"— and I want a life back from you. My own."

Sturgess said fiercely, "D'you want a drink? I do!" Three times he started out in the wrong direction, before he could remember where the liquor was kept.

Forman was thoroughly at ease now, sure of himself. Or else that was his game, to seem sure of himself, to appear not to have any doubts, to take it for granted.

He said, holding his little whiskey glass up to the light and studying it idly, "Don't take it so hard." He went on with detached curiosity, as though confronting for the first time some rare trait he'd often heard of but never encountered until now: "You're dead on the level, aren't you? So straight it hurts." He made a grimace. "Gee, it must be hell to be like that! I had you figured that way even that night. The way you jumped in without knowing how to swim. I'm good that way at sizing people up. I've had to be. That's why I came here. D'you think I'd have taken a chance like this on one of those other guys you string along with?

Sturgess had sat down now, staring sightlessly at the problem as though it were spread out on the carpet before him. He heard the man say, "Is this the only bottle in the place?"

He nodded absently. He heard the thudding of liquid on the carpet and he looked up. Forman was holding the uncorked bottle upside down. Sturgess didn't say anything. A million little things like that didn't matter; there was only one thing that mattered. Forman explained, "I want to keep your thinking straight. And mine too. I can't take a chance. What it's all about might get too foggy for us to handle — right."

Sturgess nodded again, to himself. That was right, from his own point of view too. Liquor made him sentimental. That could be just as danger-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ous either way, in this case — romanticize his duty or his debt. He slashed the contents of his little glass jigger viciously across the floor.

"It's simple enough," Forman remarked. Meaning: nothing to lose your temper about, nothing to go up in the air about.

"Shut up," Sturgess growled. "The less you say the better." He looked over at the open bedroom door. "When'd you sleep last? You can go in there and lie down if you want to. Get out of here!" Then as Forman rose to his feet, crooked his arms behind his head, and yawned — he was that composed — Sturgess added: "Wait a minute. Have you got a gun on you?"

"Sure. Want it?" He brought it out and indifferently pitched it across at Sturgess butt-first. "You didn't have to worry about that," he assured him. "You're my trump card. I have everything to lose and nothing to gain by —" The rest of it was lost as he went, calmly and leisurely, into the bedroom.

Sturgess heard his shoes drop, one after the other, and the bed creaked a little as it had under him earlier. He balled his hands into fists and put them up alongside his temples as though he were going to bash his own head in. After a while, as if to give his hands something to do, he picked the gun up from the side of the chair and started to empty it. Long before he'd finished, the harsh breathing of a man in deep sleep was coming from the bedroom. . . .

The knocking came within ten minutes. He stopped dead in the middle of the oval he had been coursing endlessly around the room, one heel raised clear of the floor and held that way. It came again, and the bell chirped, and a voice said, "Sturge! Are you in here?" He recognized it as Hyland's. Hyland was one of his team-mates.

He went over and closed the bedroom door first. Then he came back to the front door, put out his hand to it, breathed deeply, and threw it wide open.

Hyland was out there and another man named Ranch, and two uniformed cops. The last two had their guns out. But they'd already started away by the time he got the door open, as though summoning him had been only incidental.

Sturgess said, "What's up?"

Hyland said, "Forman broke through again! At the last minute, just as we were ready to close in! We've picked up a cab driver that brought him as far as the corner below here — he's holed up around here some place! I'm going to case the back."

"You won't find him there," Sturgess said.

He didn't offer to join them. All he said was, "I'm off duty."

Hyland gave him a look, but he turned and went loping off. His voice came drifting back with a cutting edge to it. "Sleep tight — sorry we bothered you."

Sturgess closed the door and stood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by it a minute, head down. Down as low as if he were looking at his shoes, but he wasn't.

Behind him Forman's voice said slurringly, through the narrow opening of the bedroom door, "So you went to bat for me."

Sturgess answered viciously through clenched teeth: "I don't have to turn you in behind your back while you're asleep! That isn't my way! I'm not afraid of you!"

"No," was the grudging admission, "it's your own conscience you're afraid of. And her eyes."

"You let me do the worrying about that. And stay in there." Sturgess took a threatening step forward. "Stay out of my sight, or I'll settle the problem with my own two hands!"

The door eased mockingly closed again.

Sturgess was standing in his wife's kitchen, awkwardly jockeying something hot with the help of an enveloping dishcloth, when Forman came out the second time. It was still dark, the gunmetal pall preceding dawn.

Forman lounged there in the alcove a minute, watching him. "What's this, the prisoner's last breakfast? Why so early?"

Sturgess just motioned to a chair drawn up at the formica-topped table. The guest sat down. Sturgess brought over an aluminum percolator, snatched his hand away, blew on his thumb. He sat down opposite the killer.

Forman studied him, detached. "You look like you been pulled through a knothole. I bet you pounded the carpet in there the whole time I was asleep."

To that Sturgess said, "It took me three tries before I got this right." The sink, lined with black coffee grounds, looked like some kind of flower bed. He pointed to a loaf of white bread. "You can cut some of that, if you want any."

They sat there, after that, facing each other across the table with a peculiar sort of normality, an everydayness: like two men at a kitchen table while their women were away. Forman, wolfing great chunks of spongy white bread, looked around appraisingly. "How much you pay for this place?"

There may have been a method in his assumption of unshaken confidence, his taking of immunity for granted; or there may not. He may have been as artless as he sounded, or he may have been as wary as a man cornered in a cage with a lion, who knows that to show fear is fatal. Sturgess was past knowing or caring. "Eighty-five," he said.

Forman mused, while he picked his teeth, "I never stayed in one place long enough to pay by the month."

"It might have been better if you had."

They sat a while longer in silence. Then little by little the tension grew — tension that was coming from Sturgess. His hands went down to the edge of his chair seat, gripping it on each side, like a man reluctantly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about to stand up. Forman started smoking a little faster, shortening the intervals between puffs. Finally he said, "What're you getting all white like that for? You're getting white as a ghost. You ought to see yourself!"

Sturgess said, "We're going over there. If you feel like starting anything, now's the time."

"Still looking for a way out, huh? No you don't! You don't get off that easy!"

Sturgess got up and left the kitchen without a word. When he came back he had his coat on and was holding an open manacle in his hand. He said thickly, "Come on — let's get started. Shove out your hand."

Forman slowly extended a hand flat across the table top; he started drawing back his sleeve until he had bared his forearm nearly to the elbow. On its upper reaches were transverse white scars, from breaking the glass in the submerged car window that night. He just sat and looked up at Sturgess, holding it exposed that way.

Sturgess' lips got white, he blinked, and the manacle clicked shut on the other's wrist. Forman got up and followed Sturgess out of the kitchen. "You can't go through with it," he said quietly. "It's written all over you you can't."

The window was open a little from the bottom, just below the shade. Sturgess threw out the handcuff key with a flick of his free hand.

Forman said, "You don't trust yourself, do you? It's going to be a devil of a job now to —"

The picture was lying face-down on the radio as they went past. "Is that the way you had to do it?" Forman said. Sturgess turned down the wall switch and the picture vanished. There wasn't enough light outside to penetrate the room. "You'll have to see her again," Forman pointed out. "You'll have to see her every day of your life. You can't keep her face turned away from you. What'll you do then?"

Sturgess opened the front door, swept his arm around in an arc, and towed Forman through after him. "I'm not going to beg or whine," Forman said. "I'm going to make it tough for you. It'd be a lot easier for you if I went yellow, wouldn't it?"

The killer was right again. His intuition was uncanny. If he had cringed and slobbered and resisted, accepted the role of a squirming, apprehended culprit, somehow he would have weakened the validity of his claim; Sturgess could have dragged him in without compunction. This way —

Sturgess closed the door and they went out side by side. It was steel blue overhead now, but still a little murky down at street level.

"You'll get a citation for this," Forman taunted. "You'll get promoted. You'll be the envy of every man in the department. And without having to lift a finger either. A man comes to you, that gave you the one thing you've got that you give a damn about, the one thing that holds you together, that makes you tick,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he comes *trusting* you — You're the lowest thing on the face of God's earth, Sturgess. Even an alley cur has gratitude."

"Shut up!" Sturgess roared.

They went on slowly, almost waveringly, but Sturgess was breathless with effort, as though he'd been running. The green lamps of a precinct house blinked at them as they rounded a corner, and Forman recoiled involuntarily. Sturgess could feel the hitch through the manacle.

Forman said, "They're going to kill me if you take me in there. You know that, don't you? You know that once we go up these steps no power of yours, nothing you can do, will get me out alive again, don't you? I gave you your kid's life, Sturgess. For the last time — *I want my own from you!*"

Sturgess' face was glossy with sweat, and gray in the early dawn. He brought his forearm up level to his chest and nudged Forman into motion.

"Copper!" the man beside him breathed with contempt as they trudged up the steps and inside together.

Sturgess just stood there rigid, watching the clock, that last night. They tried to tell him, "Sit down, Sturge, don't take it like that," but he didn't seem to hear them.

When the phone call from upstate came through, you couldn't see him breathe at all while the lieutenant was talking. The lieutenant hung up and was quiet.

Sturgess asked, "Was that it?"

"Yeah, that was it."

"Did he leave any word, say anything about — forgiving anybody?"

"He left a message for you," the lieutenant said unwillingly, looking down at his desk.

Sturgess came closer still. "Tell me what is it! I've got to know!"

"He said, 'Tell Sturgess I'll be seeing him again. *He* knows where to find me. In her eyes. Tell him I'll always be waiting there.' "

Sturgess put his hand to where he carried his badge, as if something hurt him there, and turned around and walked out of the room without another word.

Barbara said, half-laughingly, when he squatted down before her, his face so strained and white, and peered so closely, "What're you looking at me like that for?"

"Hold still," he said huskily, "and look at me." There was sweat all over his forehead.

Then when he had drawn a great deep breath and straightened up again she asked playfully, "Did you think you'd see something in my eyes?"

His answer to that was, "Yes. The ghost of the man who saved your life —" but he didn't tell her that.

"Well, *did* you?" she insisted.

"Yes," he admittedly sadly, "I guess I always will — a little." He took out his badge and started polishing it. "But the other way," he added mysteriously, "I wouldn't have been able to look into them at all."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With enormous regret we announce having reached the end of our stock of stories by L. J. Beeston. We confess, without the slightest trace of reservation, that we have come to love this man's work. It has a zest and an ingenuity and a spirit and an admittedly melodramatic vitality that bring back to us "the good old times," as we remember them most warmly and vividly. Every Beeston story we have published has been like a breath of high adventure, with the nostalgia of the old classics and the new Arabian Nights; and that air of excitement and good old-fashioned suspense has represented an admirable change of pace between, say, a quiet study in deduction and a psychological study of murder. Our aim has always been to give you the widest possible diversity of 'tec types, not only in individual issues of EQMM but in the sustained continuity of years, and to this end the uninhibited adventures which Mr. Beeston has framed in words have served as an important part of a balanced detectival diet.

So we now make this sincere appeal to Mr. Beeston: send us more stories — more tingling thrillers out of the thousand you have written.

THE MARK OF THE FLAIL

by L. J. BEESTON

WHENEVER I HEAR MENTION OF the Hotel Sumptuous in Piccadilly, as I did just now," said Storer, "there rises before me a keen mental photograph of Room 333, and the queer thing I saw there."

"Good! We must hear all about that, Storer," said his host, going round the table with a box of cigars.

The seven men in the dining room of a Wimpole Street house all looked at Storer expectantly.

"I noticed when I named the Hotel Sumptuous," said a big man with a convex shirt-front, "that you threw up your head as if hit by a powerful reflection. Thank you, do you mind if I keep to my own cigars? They are as strong as they are black, and they are incidentally killing me; but that is my trouble."

"Right-o!" The host snapped down the cedar-wood top and dropped into his chair at the head of the table. "Go ahead, Storer," he begged.

"The mystery began with three lines in an unsigned letter," started the narrator. "The communication entreated me, in a most earnest manner, to be at Room 333, at the Sumptuous, at 10 o'clock on a certain night in November. Of course my curiosity was fired. Anyone's curiosity would have been fired. So I went eagerly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"As I was shown into the room I saw two men there whom I recognized at once. Their names were Hanlon and Bailey. Also, it was evident from their constrained look and movements that they were there without knowing why; in short, both had received invitations similar to mine. This pleased neither them nor me. I had unconsciously anticipated something strictly personal and private, and my conceit got jarred accordingly. However, we chatted together and wondered what the deuce was on foot.

"During the next ten minutes three other men were shown into the room. Their names were Howis, Bell, and Mansford, and we were all very well acquainted. It was amusing to see the look of slightly disgusted surprise on the face of each visitor as he made his appearance. But that sort of feeling quickly passed off, and we endeavored to guess the reason which had caused the mysterious invitation to be sent to each of us.

" 'Anything in the nature of the delicately charming seems ruled out by an over-plus of the masculine element,' said Hanlon, ruefully.

" 'A suspicion that we are being hoaxed tingles my backbone,' ventured Howis.

" 'I don't know; I shouldn't like to say that,' dissented Mansford, thoughtfully. 'There may be something deep here. It has dawned upon me that the six of us were all together on a previous occasion. I allude to a weekend which we spent, about two years ago, at Sir Hugo Parly's place at Wendover, in Bucks, and which is burned into our memory by a certain deplorable event.'

" 'Ah, but there were eight of us, including Sir Hugo,' Bailey corrected.

" 'True; but Parly is abroad,' answered Mansford, 'and as for the other man — Wayridge — why, we all know where *he* is. I cannot help thinking that our being called together in this strange fashion may be connected with that astonishing affair —'

" 'Your surmise is perfectly correct,' said a deep and troubled voice which made us all start.

"As we spun round we saw a man standing at an inner door which had been concealed by a tapestry curtain. We recognized him at once, though suffering had sadly marked him since our last meeting. He was Hugh Wayridge.

"His fine features had the pallor of one who has lived a long time in the dark. And so, in a manner, he had; in a most terrible darkness. My last glimpse of him had been when he was led from the dock, sentenced to two years of imprisonment.

"We stared at him, and we looked at one another, and we coughed, and Mansford and Bell edged towards the door.

" 'I implore you not to go away, gentlemen,' interrupted Wayridge, with emotion. 'I have brought you here by a trick; but I ask you in God's name to forgive me, because I have something to say to you, and I could

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think of no other means of getting you together to listen to me.'

"Mansford and Bell came back when they saw that the rest of us had remained still. Wayridge closed the door, then crossed the room to the fireplace, and holding a corner of the mantelpiece, with his strong face averted, he again broke a silence which no one present had cared to interrupt.

" 'I want to tell you why I have been in prison,' he said, gulping once or twice. 'That must sound strange to you, since you were witnesses of my shame — my crime. You are aware that I was convicted of an abominable theft; that I stole from a man, while I was enjoying his hospitality, a jewel of great price. You saw it in my hands. I confessed it at the time; I pleaded guilty at my trial. And yet, believe me if you can, that was not the true reason why I went to prison, why I became an outcast. I am going to tell you that reason, which is so strange that you will almost certainly not believe me. Nevertheless, I must speak.

" 'The beginning, of course, was at our weekend at Sir Hugo Parly's house at Wendover. I entered that house a strong man, in perfect health; I appeared to find our brief stay as congenial as you did; and yet the chances of my ever leaving the place alive were about two in a hundred. I was as doomed as a spy who faces, blindfolded, a platoon of crack shots.

" 'For three years I had known fear, and for a month, terror. I do not mean to be mysterious. It is a situation easily understood, though unusual. When I was a young man I had allied myself to one of those secret, those rodent, societies which burrow in the underworld, and which are frequently the true and unsuspected cause of big upheavals. I am prepared, whenever you wish, to give you all particulars; but at present I must confine myself to the events of one night.

" 'Briefly, I had extricated myself from the fraternity three years before. Its methods had become too alarming for me. But my act of withdrawal had compromised me with them, and I was marked down as one whose life must be brushed aside as easily as we flick away a cobweb.

" 'I went to the Antipodes to hide myself, and for nearly two years I was successful. Then they found me. An escape from a great personal danger, which in normal circumstances would not have aroused my suspicions, made me feel apprehensive. It was followed almost immediately by another. The cold shadow of death passed within an inch of me. I knew, then, that The Society of the Flail — so they called themselves — had found me, and I fled.

" 'For months I lived on the brink of the grave. Will you try to understand what that means? Again and again I saved myself only by using the utmost vigilance; but I felt sure, down in my heart, that my days were numbered. I could not shake off my relentless enemies, who followed me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in secret, and struck in stealth. Eventually I returned to England.

" 'But my nerve was gone. One may bear up and fortify one's spirit against the advance of a fatal disease; but when the sword of murder hangs over one's head it is different. Each night I dreamed of strangling hands round my throat. A sharp sound by day made me think of a pistol shot. When I was suddenly accosted by an acquaintance I would cry out and shrink back. Such a condition of things could not last.

" 'Finally I received an anonymous note. The writer claimed — though he may have lied — that hitherto my sworn foes, of whom he was one, had been only playing with me, and that the real blow was about to fall. An invitation to Sir Hugo Parly's house, which I had accepted, was mentioned in the unsigned letter; and it closed with the assurance that I should meet my death during the visit.

" 'And I knew perfectly well that I should. The Society of the Flail does not boast. My last hours had arrived.

" 'Police protection? I had already tried it, and in vain. I might have kept away from the Wendover house? It would have been utterly useless.

" 'I went, therefore, knowing that I should never return. The Saturday passed off and nothing happened. The Sunday crept away. When I retired to my room that night I felt on the verge of mental collapse. And a longing to tell someone of my terrible situation became so strong that I yielded to it. I went to the room of one of my fellow-guests, and I — I told him all. He is here now, and he must remember.'

"As Wayridge paused we all looked at one another. After a short silence Hanlon cleared his throat and spoke.

" 'That is quite true,' said he. 'You came to my room, Wayridge. You told me that you were in deadly fear. Mingled with your very real terror was a certain shame of it, and you asked me to respect your secret. I did so.'

" 'Principally because you did not altogether believe me,' said Wayridge, heavily. 'I could tell, from your manner, that you thought I was suffering from a nervous complaint.'

" 'Yes, I did think that,' agreed Hanlon.

" 'You were wrong,' said Wayridge, gloomily. 'It did not matter, however; you could not have helped me. I left you, and I returned to my own room.

" 'I locked my door; I saw that my window was secured. I made a careful examination of my room. But in spite of these precautions I could not dismiss a heart-chilling instinct that I should be murdered before morning.

" 'I did not undress. The hours crawled by. My sufferings increased — the accumulated suffering of a whole year of dreadful expectation. My hearing was strained to catch the slightest sound. Between 2 and 3 o'clock I heard a click downstairs as if a window-bolt had been forced back!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

" 'To me that noise was as the footfall of death. Blame me for cowardice if you will. I simply could not help it. Someone had entered the house, and it was for my life that person had come.' "

At this point in his tale Storer paused to finish his wine, for he was a trifle husky. Also he noted that he had the absorbed attention of the company, and he knew the value of a halt at a critical juncture. The cigars round the dining table glowed strongly, and a heavy smoke hung over the man who was shortening his days with his black weeds.

"I shall not readily forget Wayridge's emotion as he unfolded to us the events of that night," continued Storer. "He need not have labored to make us understand what he had passed through, for vivid recollection of the ordeal paled his wasted cheeks, and beaded his forehead with perspiration.

" 'I waited in my room, scarcely daring to breathe,' Wayridge went on. 'Several minutes passed, but not the faintest sound succeeded that first one. Nevertheless, I was absolutely certain that I had heard the sharp click of a window-fastener which had suddenly yielded. At length, unable to bear the suspense any longer, I opened my door. There was no one outside. I stepped to the head of the staircase and listened again. After a minute or two I caught an almost inaudible sound of someone moving in a room below.

" 'I did not stir. I was sure that the person would come up, and I had made up my mind to spring upon him in the dark, as he climbed the stairs. But he did not come. Slight noises were now frequent, and at last I resolved to go down.

" 'I descended the stairs with infinite caution. I reached the door of the room in which I was sure an intruder was lurking. But he did not emerge, and I took hold of the handle of the door. It turned without making a sound, and I peered in.

" 'A single glance showed me that I had made a mistake. I saw, not an assassin, but a common thief. He had switched on the electric light and was most clearly revealed. He did not see me, for his back was towards me. To the right was the open window through which he had entered. He was kneeling before a small safe, which he had obviously succeeded in forcing. From it he had taken a jewel box, and when I first saw him he was lifting out a string of pearls — the well-known pearls of Lady Parly.

" 'As I took a step forward, perhaps incautiously, a board creaked under my foot. He turned his head, gave me one glance, and without an instant's pause rushed to the window. It was lightning-like. One moment he was stooping before me, the next he had vanished. I leaped to the window, and I saw the string of pearls lying across it, dropped by the fellow in his flight. I picked it up, uncertain for a second whether to follow, and in that luckless moment Sir Hugo, followed by you, Howis, and Hanlon close be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hind, rushed into the room. The same slight sounds which had disturbed me had drawn them to the spot.

" 'Sir Hugo Parly roared out, "Here he is, by Heaven!" Then he pulled himself up abruptly, for he recognized me.

" 'And I, gentlemen, saw the suspicion leap into his eyes. Well it might! There was the open safe, the pearls clenched in my hand, and I had one leg across the open window.

" 'I had but a second in which to act. An immediate repudiation of the terrible suspicion looking from every pair of eyes fixed upon me, an instant explanation, would have saved me. But I did not make it. Why?

" 'Because in that moment an idea passed like a flame of fire through my brain. I saw the gates of a prison open to me. I might escape them; I *could* escape them, and by a word. But if I did, I was a dead man. A prison? Why, in that instant of time, when thoughts went roaring like a tempest through my head, I realized that the confines of a cell would surely and absolutely shelter me from those enemies who had made each day a torment which I would give anything to annihilate. The long knife of an assassin would never pierce the stone walls of a dungeon. To me they would prove a refuge, a salvation.

" 'To tell you of this strange, this bizarre inspiration occupies an appreciable time; but it presented itself to my tortured senses with the swiftness of light. Remember, I had to act with the quickness of a man whose head is in the tiger's jaws, and who feels those jaws closing.

" 'I made my choice. I tossed the pearls at the feet of Sir Hugo Parly. "I have lost," I said, grimly, "and I must take the consequences."

" 'You know what those consequences were, gentlemen. I received a sentence of two years' imprisonment. The thief might have left traces of himself, but in the circumstances no one dreamed of looking for any such thing. Yet I was as innocent as yourselves of the crime for which I was convicted.

" 'Do I regret my decision? I do not. I am convinced that it kept me on the right side of a grave. The question which confronts me now is — can you accept my story?

" 'I dare not hope that you will. The situation I have described must seem to you so unusual as to be almost fantastic. Yet my future rests upon your verdict; it is for you to decide if I am to know a relative happiness, or to be extinguished.'

"As Wayridge concluded his story he lifted his haggard eyes and looked at us steadily for the first time. What he saw did not encourage him.

" 'I am asking a big thing of you,' he went on. 'I want reinstatement among decent men and women. This you can give me by accepting the facts which I have placed before you. Your position and your influence can remove the brand of felon which marks me. God knows I need friends, and God knows I have done nothing to lose them.' "

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We still remained silent, each furtively glancing at the other.

" 'I see that I am not believed,' said Wayridge, circles of crimson burning in the wasted hollows of his cheeks. 'I must admit that I did not entertain much hope of convincing you. If I stood where you are I should probably share your incredulity.'

"Mansford was the first among us to break the silence. He said, blurtingly:

" 'Are we to assume, now that you are discharged, that you are still menaced by this secret society?'

" 'The Society of the Flail was rooted out and practically exterminated fifteen months ago,' replied Wayridge, eagerly and anxiously. 'I read the news in one of the newspapers, in the prison library. It was uprooted as a body. Most of its individual members still exist, I suppose; but they are not to be feared by me, the organization being destroyed.'

" 'I seem to remember reading about it myself,' said Howis.

" 'I think you will agree with me, gentlemen,' spoke out Bailey, turning to us, 'that any judgment we may pass upon this matter must be influenced by the evidence of Hanlon, whom Wayridge took into his confidence an hour or two before the theft at Sir Hugo Parly's house. You admitted, Hanlon, did you not, that Wayridge told you that he feared he would be murdered before the morning?'

" 'Oh, yes, he told me all about that matter,' assented Hanlon, dryly.

" 'But you did not think fit to mention it at Wayridge's trial?' continued Bailey.

" 'Certainly not,' answered Hanlon, in the same dry tone. 'Wayridge's story of taking guilt upon himself to save his skin did not occur to me. And if it had, I should have rendered him doubtful service by speaking.'

" 'Possibly, at the time, you concluded that Wayridge had invented what he told you?' pressed Bailey. 'You were annoyed with him for trying to throw dust in your eyes? In short, you had not the least doubt of his trying to steal Lady Parly's pearls?'

" 'No; and I see no reason for changing my opinion now,' said Hanlon, coolly.

"At those words Wayridge lifted his head, hesitated a moment, then walked towards the door. Wheeling round he faced us with a sudden air of resolution which lighted up his worn face.

" 'Wait!' he called out, sharply and clearly. 'I hoped that you might accept my story without my bringing a painful truth as its witness. But I see the necessity of my proving it, and I will hesitate no longer. The Society of the Flail marked each of its members, upon the palm of the right hand, with a representation of the instrument of which it bore the name — a Flail.

" 'You think that the peril which threatened me was not sufficient to drive me into a prison for shelter? You doubt that part of my story? Then I will show you how imminent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it was, how sickeningly real. When Hanlon, there, among others, rushed into the room and found me apparently escaping with the necklace, he threw up his right hand in surprise; and I saw, on his palm, the dreaded mark of the Flail! The agent of the Society, the man sent to kill me, was one of yourselves!'

"As a gasp of astonishment left our lips, Hanlon cried out: 'That's an infernal lie!' He rushed to the door.

"It was a lightning dash, but not quick enough to beat Wayridge. He caught Hanlon's right arm and twisted it so that the other screamed aloud. Wayridge forced it up, wrenching aside the fingers; and we all saw, black and sinister upon the white skin of the palm, the mark of the Flail!

"Before any of us could move, before we could recover from the shock of that dramatic denouement, Hanlon tore himself loose, dashed through the open door, and vanished.

"As for poor Wayridge, that climax to his sufferings completely overcame him. He went to pieces all at once. It is not nice to hear a strong man sobbing his heart out. Poor, poor devil."

Storer had finished his tale. He filled his glass. "That is why I remember Room 333 at the Hotel Sumptuous," he added.

"And you have excellent reason," said a listener, when the murmur of applause had subsided. "I envy you the adventure."

"And you all put Wayridge back into his proper niche in society?" said another auditor.

"We saw him thoroughly righted," answered Storer, gladly.

"And, of course, Wayridge, having been one of the Flail, bore the mark upon *his* right palm?" questioned the man with the black cigar carelessly.

"I did not examine him personally," said Storer.

"No? And did you ever hunt up Hanlon, afterwards, to see if the mark on his palm was indelible, and that it had not been put there, shall we say, for one night only?"

"Excuse me, sir, but you seem to be sceptical," answered Storer, with asperity.

"Oh, I do, I do!" agreed the other, with enthusiasm.

"Then may I ask what the devil you are driving at?"

"Yes, tell him!" shouted everybody.

The other removed his terrible cigar and waved it gracefully. "Willingly, when I have asked him two more questions," said he. "One: did you and your friends, Storer, make any kind of money collection for Wayridge?"

"We assisted him financially, yes — and substantially, I must admit," was Storer's irritated answer.

"Ah! Question two: can you recall any subsequent theft of valuable jewels occurring in the circle of your friends? The kind of daring haul, for instance, which might have been effected by a smart crook whom you had all taken to your arms, and so given him plenty of opportunity?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Storer, red in the face, half rose from his chair, then sat down again. "I will not allow the insinuation," he spluttered. "True, a few weeks later, Mansford was robbed of a piece of presentation gold plate —"

"Ah!" interrupted the other, delightedly, "I thought so. Why, I know your Wayridge, and I know your Hanlon! The Society of the Flail did exist, but I'll swear that neither Wayridge nor Hanlon ever had anything to do with it. They are a couple of gilt-edged crooks, working together; a couple of so-called gentlemen thieves, who have edged themselves into decent society! You may take it as absolutely certain that they managed to get an invitation to Sir Hugo Parly's with the intention of stealing Lady Parly's pearl necklace. Wayridge went downstairs and opened the safe. Probably Hanlon was with him; but, if so, Hanlon contrived to get out before the interruption. Wayridge's tale of finding a burglar there was pure invention. The only thieves in the house that night were himself and Hanlon. He really was caught in the act of jewel lifting by Sir Hugo Parly and the rest, and he deserved the two years he got for it. He invented the burglar part of the story, and he invented the yarn about his being threatened by The Society of the Flail, with a view to making you and your friends, met together in Room 333, believe that he was an innocent man. He arranged that scene, he and Hanlon. They acted it to the very life, apparently. Why? Because he wanted to get into a good set again, he wanted the substantial collection you raised for him, and future opportunities of robbing you. Listen! I met both of them not so very long ago, at the gaming tables at Monte Carlo. Perhaps they were playing with the proceeds of your friend Mansford's piece of gold plate! A couple of crooks of the first magnitude. A couple of deep-swimming sharks!"

He looked at them triumphantly.

The loud hum of sensation which rose from the excited listeners was cut short by Storer banging his fist upon the table.

"Dammit, sir, you have spoiled a good story!" he shouted.

"Dammit, sir," beamed the other, "I have *made* it!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WINNER OF A SECOND PRIZE

Few of us are fortunate enough to travel extensively, and even fewer have the good luck to visit, let alone live for a time in, the Hawaiian Islands. Well, we can't give you an all-expense-paid trip to that paradise of the Pacific — but, believe it or not, we can offer you the the next best thing! For we now bring you a suspense novelette — the tale of the inexorable events leading up to tragedy — set against the background of the real Hawaii, the Hawaii that tourists never see. It is a beautifully written story, by a mature writer who lived in Hawaii for seven years, and knows whereof she speaks. You will, vicariously, see the travel-folder sights — Kilauea volcano, the Waikiki beach curving out toward Diamond Head, the Kanaka surf; but you will also — and a good notch above the vicarious — experience the color, the sound, the feel, the smell, even the taste of true Hawaiian hospitality and customs.

For the space of a novelette you will live among jagged mountains and legendary canyons, in valleys like Gardens of Eden, in a land of thundering waterfalls where "rainbows tilted from Manoa into the sea"; you will see the hulas, smell the leis, hear the alohas; you will have the thrill of spearing fish at night with Kukui torches; you will eat laulaus — salt salmon, butterfish, and pork wrapped in ti leaves; you will witness the courtship dance — a dance no tourist ever sees; you will attend that wonderful feast, a luau — tropical fruit surrounded by fern fronds and hibiscus blossoms, and pigs roasted in the imu with red yams and breadfruit and crayfish and . . . but why keep you from the next-to-the-best thing? If your mouth does not already water, if your mind is not already whetted, if your curiosity is not already piqued, then even the suspense and crime and fascinating characters in Juanita Sheridan's fine story will not help.

"Johnie" Sheridan is, in her own words, "one-half domestic fowl and the other half adventuress." We hope fervently to have other stories by her, and when these come through we will tell you more about Juanita Sheridan's real-life escapades, especially her pioneering in — of all places! — Rockland County, New York. She is the author of, among other books, THE KAHUNA KILLER, THE MAMO MURDERS, *and most recently,* THE WAIKIKI WIDOW — *all splendid detective novels about one of her favorite spots on earth, the happy (and on occasion homicidal) Hawaiian Islands.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THERE ARE NO SNAKES IN HAWAII

by JUANITA SHERIDAN

IF YOU ARE EVER FORTUNATE ENOUGH to go to Hawaii, one of the first stories you'll hear, from island hosts, your tour conductor, or perhaps another *malihini* on the beach, is about the man who stopped off ten years ago to have his laundry done — and who is still there. The laundry story is told in terms of demobilized service men, schoolteachers, a bored executive, or the prim secretary who found her inhibitions dissolved in the sun and silky waters. There are infinite versions — and in Hawaii you accept them all.

This is especially true if you happen to belong to that unshockable, curiosity-ridden tribe of human oddities known as writers. Then you become a sort of perambulating storage vault of stories, many of them unprintable. Some are cackled into your ear at cocktail parties, others you may hear in a whispered voice, harsh with the relief of telling.

A few of the unprintables concern those unlucky souls who did *not* find paradise in the Pacific. Generally they are individuals to whom the discarding of social posturings means the exposure of spirits as flabby as the physical nakedness they shrink from uncovering. When for some reason they are forced to remain in our sun-drenched latitudes, their puny rebellion manifests itself in sharpened voices, tight mouths, and personalities gone sour.

But there are certain heliophobes of more stubborn fibre. If the relaxed life of a tropical island is a threat to them, then adjustment is impossible. Resentment and vindictiveness seethe in their hearts like fury rumbling in the vitals of Kilauea, gathering force which must ultimately erupt and destroy — as the dreaded lava sears the soil.

Today an eruption of Kilauea is a big attraction; it looks terrific in Technicolor. The human analogy is something else again, not mentioned by the Hawaii Tourist Bureau. But if you stay in the Islands long enough you will hear about it. You may even see it happen — as we saw it happen to the Purcells.

Surely I do not have to point out that the roots of murder, like the soil-probing roots of a tree destined to bear fruit, are nourished deep in human personality. The beginning of the Purcells' tragedy must be surmised. Only two people know its real ending. Anne was involved partly because of Leila Morgan — Anne is my wife. And I, John Ellis, was the unwitting catalyst.

Our participation dated from a day in January when the mailman brought letters from the mainland. Anne and I were in the garden; I was reading

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the second draft of a story while Anne was lacquering her toenails. At the scrape of our mailbox I tensed and put down the yellow paper. Anne dipped her brush, raised her other foot in one graceful motion, and went on painting.

"Walk, do not run," she said. "We've paid off the mortgage, remember?"

"So we have." I got up and started around the side of the house.

By the time we're married eight more years, perhaps I'll have achieved some measure of Anne's wisdom and serenity. From the day we met, a week before I was due to leave Hawaii with nothing in my pocket except a filled notebook and the last two hundred bucks of my terminal leave pay, through the first eighteen months when I finally sold a book which earned $523.42, after a few published stories and two more tepidly unsuccessful novels, Anne was unwaveringly certain that I was the world's best writer, ours was the most wonderful marriage, and everything was going to be all right.

Now my last book had been bought for serialization in a national fiction magazine and the hard-cover edition was destined for the best-seller list. Our home was paid for (Anne insisted on that first), we had money in the bank, she had quit her job as one of Pan American's most decorative hostesses, and we were arguing over what to name our first child. I still felt giddy when I thought about it.

I came back from the mailbox with two envelopes, saying, "One's for you."

Mine was from my agent and I held it to the light. No check. I looked at the letter for Anne. "It's from Leila Morgan. Postmarked New York — I thought they were in France."

"So did I." Anne reached for the envelope. "I hope she's not sick again."

My letter began: "Dear John: With arrival of the next Lurline you'll have a legitimate excuse to stop work and dispense some Hawaiian hospitality."

I made an annoyed sound and Anne looked up. "More revisions?"

"No. Visitors." I read again.

"Troy Purcell, no less than the famous Troy, is being shipped to Honolulu. He's going to illustrate your story and you know what that means circulation-wise. The lowdown is that the publisher wants him to sign a contract. Troy has accepted this assignment but won't commit himself further, says he's tired. This in spite of the highest price ever offered an illustrator and the fact that a view of the East River, framed to Mavis Purcell's taste, costs plenty. Anne will remember their place — we went to a party there when she was with that Pan American publicity tour last fall. Remind her of the bird cage in the bathroom."

"Hey," I said. "You didn't tell me you'd met Troy Purcell."

She looked up, frowning slightly. "Troy Purcell — oh, the artist. He's a nice guy."

I went on reading. "Seriously, John,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I don't think the Purcells' visit should be much of a headache. for you. Although they're booked for a month at the Royal Hawaiian, Troy has vetoed all publicity. Recently he's become difficult; goes on a terrific binge before he starts a job. He never fails to deliver, but this pre-partum suspense has not endeared him to editors. The alcoholic problem won't be yours. All you're expected to do is steer him to backgrounds and Polynesian models. The rest you can leave to Mavis — she always handles him beautifully."

I tossed the letter to Anne. "Bet I can describe that bathroom. Black and scarlet, and a gold bird cage."

"The bath is gray," Anne said, "and the bird cage is silver." She added in a remembering voice, "Beige carpeting laid wall to wall. Sheer glass curtains under ashes-of-roses damask. Fruitwood chairs with *petit point* —"

"— and Haviland china —"

"Limoges. The bed was upholstered in eggshell satin and the spread was quilted blue velvet." She looked at me with a small grin. "And our bedspread is only monkscloth. Thank heaven you're not a monk —"

I started to make a suitable answer.

"Stay where you are," she said. "It's too hot."

I picked up my manuscript, decided it was lousy, and laid it aside while my thoughts reverted to the artist. "It's hard to imagine," I said.

"Imagine what?"

"A guy like Purcell, working in such pastel perfection."

"I saw his studio," Anne told me. "It's enormous, and practically stark. That's where the man really lives."

"Was the party given there?"

"Oh, no. That room is *kapu.* Definitely not the background for the sort of shindig his wife throws. It was perfect, the ultra-chic Manhattan cocktail party, for ultra-chic people. You know the kind."

I had been to a few before I left New York. People invited because they were amusing or clever or had made some kind of success. Insincerely cordial greetings, facile chitchat barbed with gossip, trills of artificial laughter, acquaintances who made bright conversation at you while their eyes searched the room to be sure there wasn't somebody more important they should talk to. When the babel reached a certain sustained pitch, the hostess knew her party was a success.

"What's Mavis Purcell like?" I asked.

"Small. Blonde. Porcelain and roseleaf coloring. Honey-colored satin by Valentina. Doesn't go to beauty salons — they send operators to her."

"*Auwe!*" I said. "Those Troy Girls had better be good."

"What's so remarkable about the Troy Girls?"

"Full-page color, in the big-circulation magazines." I shuffled through a pile on the table. "Don't you ever read these?"

"Only the recipes," Anne admitted. "They're wonderful." Then she sat up straight and studied what I had handed her. "Hey, Johnny. This is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

almost good! I'll bet he started out to be a fine artist."

"Fine art," I reminded her, "sometimes buys a view of the East River — for your grandchildren. Anyhow, most people prefer this."

It was the usual haunting Troy picture, lacking the details of most magazine illustrations: a girl at a railroad station on a foggy night, watching a train depart.

"His women always have that look," I said. "It has made them pin-ups all over the globe. Without sweaters, too. It's something in the way their lips curve, the way their eyes look at you with a kind of yearning."

"Perhaps," Anne suggested, "the yearning is in him."

"No doubt," I said. "And we know now what it is. Thirst."

"It won't hurt us to make them happy for a month, since he's being sent here especially to do your story." Anne began to chant: "— And so, as the pride of the Matson fleet glides into the blue waters of Honolulu harbor —"

"— we see our hero and heroine, brightly smiling, bearing *leis* and *aloha* —"

"— boarding the tug which will take them out to meet their new friends, the famous artist and his charming wife —"

We began to laugh.

The first impression I had of Troy Purcell was that here was a man worn to exhaustion. He wore a knife-creased light palm beach suit (new, I decided) as if it chafed every inch of his big frame. His tie had already slipped sideways, his collar was damp. He looked in his early forties, his thinning brown hair was rumpled, and his deep-circled eyes held perplexity, as if the inner man also had never found proper garments.

Mavis appeared years younger; perhaps it was his awkwardness which made her seem so fragile. When we entered their cabin she was folding yellow chiffon into a meticulously packed dressing case. After we introduced ourselves, the first thing Mavis mentioned was her relief at being able to sub-let their apartment to our friends.

"I won't worry the least bit now," she said, "knowing we have responsible people there. Last year when we came back from Europe the place had been broken into."

"Was very much stolen?" I asked.

"Silver, a crystal clock — things like that. Fortunately we were insured. But some of the pieces can't be replaced."

"This bag ready?" her husband asked, and started to pick it up.

"Lock it first, dear."

She handed him some keys. While he bent over the bag I saw that he had a tic. A muscle in his cheek twitched occasionally.

"I'll take those," Mavis said, and she zipped the keys back into her purse. "Is your husband as absent-minded as mine? Troy can't remember for two minutes where he's put things."

"Oh, yes," Anne lied cheerfully.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Johnny's helpless as a babe, especially when he's working." She sent me a finger signal which said, "For heaven's sake, keep your mouth shut," and descended on Mavis, who recoiled.

"Don't be startled, Mrs. Purcell. Giving *leis* is an Island custom. Welcome to Hawaii."

I draped ropes of *plumeria* around Troy's neck and he sniffed deeply. "My God, I didn't know flowers could smell like this!" He turned to his wife. "Aren't they wonderful?"

She was lifting gardenias to see whether they had stained her silk dress. "They're so lovely I almost hate to — Where are you going, Troy?"

The muscle in Troy's cheek twitched. "Let's go up — it's hot as hell in here."

From the promenade deck there was a good view. Honolulu starts with one of the world's cleanest harbors. Ships dock there almost in the heart of the city, which spreads back over a plateau to the Koolau Range. That day the mountains were veiled in mist, which parted occasionally to reveal jungled slopes of variegated greens gashed with purple and indigo valleys through which ran the coppery lines of roads. It was raining in the distance. As we watched, the trades swept clouds away and a rainbow tilted from Manoa Valley into the sea.

"Just look at that!" Troy burst out. "Did you ever see anything more beautiful?"

"Islanders consider the rainbow a good omen," Anne told him. "You're getting a special welcome."

Mavis laid her hand on her husband's arm. "Darling," she said. "I'm so thrilled. You'll do the best work of your life here."

"You say that about every job," he growled. "Nobody can paint those colors." He leaned on the rail, shading his eyes with one hand, and began identifying them in a sort of incredulous mutter: Ultramarine, scarlet, cobalt, magenta, vermilion, emerald . . .

He seemed dazed as he went down the gangplank.

We took them to the Queen's Surf that night, and were a party of six, Peggy and Bill Garrison making the third couple. Bill was an agreeable fellow, an insurance-broker acquaintance of Troy's from New York. Casual remarks between the two men, and intimate chatter of their wives, indicated that friendship had developed during the crossing.

Troy asked when we sat down, "What'll we have to drink? Got any specialties here in the Islands?"

Mavis said, "I'll stick to my usual, Troy."

I noticed that Mavis began to watch apprehensively when Troy finished his fifth highball; she must have said something to him on the dance floor, because he looked subdued when they returned. While the Garrisons were dancing, Mavis and Anne went to the powder room and Troy said, "Let's go have a look at the Pacific."

He and I walked through the tropical garden to the sea wall. A torch fisherman moved slowly in the dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tance; outside the periphery of his flare the water looked like ink. We lit cigarettes and stood silent. There was a quarter moon; we watched it slip over Diamond Head until the sea was enameled silver.

Troy said, like a man in a dream: "It was snowing when we left New York. I thought I'd never be warm again." Then he faced me suddenly. "They gave me some galleys and I read your story on the way over. Is it a true story?"

I hesitated, feeling that something important depended on my answer. "The *haole* — white — characters are fiction. The Hawaiians — and the background — are authentic."

"You mean there really is a valley, a place like that?"

"Yes. Not exactly like it, of course. But I had a certain place in mind when I was writing. It's on Kauai — that's another island."

He sighed, "We'd better go back. The women . . ."

We reached our table in time to see an impromptu celebration. A stately Hawaiian woman in a flowered *holoku* rose and bowed from her seat at a floorside table. "What is it?" Troy asked, and Anne said, "She is having a birthday party."

Someone called, "*Liliu E!*" and the woman smiled, looked at the orchestra, and finally began to dance the story of Queen Liliuokalani.

She wasn't as supple as a young woman, but her *hula* was very good: her hips swayed gracefully, arms and fingers wove interpretive patterns in the air as she told the story of the beloved queen whose mouth was curved with laughter, whose shoulders waved like a fan, whose little feet danced round the world . . .

When she finished Troy rose abruptly and left us. He came back with his arms filled with *leis*. He dumped them on our table, shook loose a wreath of red carnations, and went over to the gray-haired woman who had been dancing. He bowed and said something, hung the flowers around her neck, and then kissed her.

I looked at Mavis. She was watching him indulgently. When he sat beside her again she said, smiling, "Troy! Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?"

Troy's cheek twitched. He picked up his glass. "Because she was so beautiful."

"Beautiful?" Mavis looked at the Hawaiian woman and then at Troy. "Darling, you really *must* be drunk!"

A few nights later the four of them came to our house for dinner. Troy had a sunburn. He squirmed in his chair, tried to pretend interest while Mavis and the Garrisons asked questions about our island life, and gulped four martinis before we went to the table. After dinner some friends arrived, including David Kimu, the Hawaiian. David was Anne's childhood playmate, who became my best friend at Columbia. He was now doing graduate work in sociology at the University of Hawaii.

David was dressed casually in a red

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aloha shirt and blue cotton pants. He took off his shoes, as most of us do, when he came into the house. Seeing our guests in more formal clothes didn't faze him; he said, "*Malihinis?*" and added, with his brilliant smile, "*Aloha nui loa!*"

I mentioned Troy's commission and said I hoped David would be able to help him. David sat on the floor, accepted a drink, and asked what Troy was most interested in. A few minutes after that Troy was beside him, looking comfortable for the first time that evening. They were talking about the Islands.

Peggy Garrison was fascinated with David. "What a gorgeous man!" she said under her breath to Anne. "Did you say he was a childhood playmate?"

"We grew up together," Anne told her. "David was the one who taught me to swim, and to *hula* — among other things —"

I made a note to tell her to go easy on the next drink. But the slight mockery in Anne's voice went unnoticed. The look Peggy turned on her held speculation — and the faintest trace of envy.

Mavis's mind didn't run in those channels. She commented, studying David with narrowed violet eyes, "He'd make a wonderful model. A perfect native specimen."

My hackles rose. I forbore mentioning that David was a sociologist. I said instead that most Hawaiians are exceptionally handsome people and few can match them for natural grace and dignity. I was going on in this vein when I perceived that Mavis's face had gone blank with boredom, and I changed the subject.

From then on our group was divided; Troy and David on the floor gradually joined by Bill and our other friends; Anne and I sitting on the *punee* with the two visiting women discussing the smartest places to dine, addresses of good local shops, and the type of entertainment given by Honolulu's upper-echelon socialites. When those subjects were exhausted Anne mentioned the Dillinghams' famous Japanese garden, and from there we went to descriptions of other Honolulu show places, a topic which proved inexhaustible. Anne can manage that sort of thing gracefully. For me it was heavy going; I finally broke away with the excuse that I'd better mix some drinks. Out in the kitchen I offered myself a dividend.

When I returned to the living room David was saying that Hawaiian chants are wonderful but difficult to describe. Under the influence of my private dividend, I broke in with: "Why don't we play some records?"

This brought the usual result: we spent the rest of the night singing and doing *hulas*. The party broke up at 2 and Troy left only at his wife's insistence.

Anne reproached me the next day. "You were remiss as a host, fella. I don't think Mavis Purcell will forgive you."

"I'm sorry," I said unregretfully. "I should have realized folklore would be too deep for Troy's wife."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't make the mistake of labeling her stupid," Anne warned. "She knows exactly what she wants — and she's got it. You can be sure she has no intention of giving it up."

"So who cares?" I retorted. "They're nothing in our lives. David will take Troy in hand from now on. We can put the Purcells out of mind."

But a week or so later conscience drove me to the hotel to inquire how they were getting along. I was startled when the room clerk said that Mr. Purcell was out of town, but did I wish to speak to Mrs. Purcell? I said no, guiltily, and turned to encounter the Garrisons. When they invited me to have a drink I consented, hoping to hear news of Troy.

"He's on some other island," Peggy said in a disapproving tone. "That Hawaiian we met at your house sent him over to stay at some kind of native village."

We were on the terrace of the Royal with an excellent view of Waikiki curving out toward Diamond Head. Peggy waved a hand. "The beach is crawling with Hawaiians. And this island has plenty of scenery. Why should Troy have to sneak off —"

"*Peggy!*" Her husband interrupted. She flashed an angry look at him.

She was afraid, I thought. The little flicker of desire she had felt at the sight of David was immediately quenched.

"All right," Peggy said. "He didn't sneak off. He told us where he was going. But he's been gone a week, while Mavis is stuck here. Why did he choose some place where he knows she can't go with him?"

I was beginning to feel uneasy. "Why couldn't she go?"

"Because," Peggy informed me, "the place he went to can't be reached except by plane. And Mavis is deathly afraid of flying. That's why they came on the Lurline instead of by Clipper."

At this I felt even more disquieted. I thanked them for the drink and left. Bill caught up with me just as I got into the car.

"Look, John." He hesitated.

"What's on your mind?"

"If you know where Troy is you might hint that he should get back here pretty soon. Mavis doesn't feel well. She got a skin rash from eating fresh pineapple."

"Many tourists do. I forgot to caution her about that."

"It upset her quite a bit. She stayed in the room a couple of days until it went away. But she's afraid something else might happen."

"You mean," I said, "Mavis might be finding this climate too much for her?"

He grinned and nodded. Then he grew more serious. "I'm speaking as a friend of Troy's now, as well as his insurance broker. He's lucky he carries a good policy with us because he might not be able to get another. The guy really needs a complete rest. When he's home he works like crazy — won't take care of himself. I'd like to see him stay his month out." He looked at me, then added uncomfort-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ably, "Mavis and Peggy are pretty thick. Neither of them would appreciate knowing that I —"

"Don't worry. I won't mention it."

I went home and called David. When he told me where he had sent Troy, I was really disturbed. I hung up and said to Anne, "Troy Purcell has gone to Kauai. His wife is here alone. And she's been showing symptoms —" I repeated what Bill had told me, but added, "She may look delicate. I'll bet she's tough as an elephant."

"Remember the elephant's other attribute," Anne reminded me. "Both times that Troy Purcell's had a taste of island life, he forgot his wife entirely. Why don't you call him?"

"There's no telephone." When I told her where on Kauai he had gone, Anne said slowly, "I wonder why David did that?"

"I have a hunch Troy insisted on it." I was remembering our conversation by the sea wall at the Queen's Surf. "What should I do, Anne?"

"Well," she said, "he is in a way your responsibility. You'd better go after him."

I worried in the inter-island plane all the way to Kauai. David had sent me there when I talked to him about research for my story. It hadn't upset my emotional balance. But then my choice had been made; the islands were my home, not a tantalizing glimpse of loveliness I must put behind me after a brief vacation. For an artist, high-strung and susceptible, there might be no more dangerous place in all Hawaii — perhaps in all the world — to send a man like Troy.

Tourist literature calls Kauai The Garden Isle. But to many Polynesians the island is a haunted place. There are even a few white people who claim they cannot stand more than a few weeks of its atmosphere. Oldest of the Hawaiian group, Kauai possesses jagged mountains, unexplored legendary canyons, valleys into which waterfalls thunder to become rivers cascading to the sea, sacred regions where ancient *heiaus* still stand and ghost drums herald nightly processions of ghostly Hawaiian warriors.

On the northern coast of Kauai there exist today a few isolated communities in valleys as lovely as the Garden of Eden, hidden between awesome rock walls and accessible only by tortuous trails pre-dating King Kamehameha. In these localities the rhythm of Polynesian life has hardly changed; here people grow taro and weave *lauhala*, toss nets from rocky ledges into a churning sea, spear fish at night with *kukui* torches flaring orange over black waters. In such a place certain personalities succumb irresistibly to enchantment of the spirit.

And Troy Purcell had been there a week.

Since the coastal approach to the village is unnavigable, he had been taken there by plane, and it was in the same Piper Cub, piloted by a Hawaiian named Keoni, that I went after him. I didn't know what pretext I would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

use to bring him back to Honolulu.

But none was necessary. When we settled on the landing strip near the lagoon a group came to meet us, and among them was Troy.

"Hi, John. Glad you decided to come over." As he reached the plane he called to the pilot, "Keoni! You're a day ahead of time."

Hawaiians gathered around us, asking, "How's the fishing? What news from Lihue? Did you bring canned milk?" Troy and I withdrew to the edge of the palm grove and lit cigarettes.

He didn't seem different, except that his redness had turned to brown and his waist must have been thinner because he had difficulty keeping his pants up. He wore an unbuttoned cotton shirt and he was barefoot.

"I've found my models," he said. "A couple are coming over to Oahu to pose for me. One of them is Keoni."

"When will you start to work?" I was careful to keep relief out of my voice.

"I was planning to leave tomorrow, but we may as well go today. Unless," he looked as if it had just occurred to him, "you have some reason for staying here?"

"No. I just came to see how you're getting on."

"I'm fine," he said. "I've never been so — hey, Lala! That's my other model. Isn't she a beauty?"

I studied the girl as she walked toward us. She was tall, superbly modeled under the cotton dress she wore; in her way (not the Dorothy Lamour way nor even with the sullen secretiveness of Gauguin's Tahitians) she was very beautiful. Her hair was glossy black and from the thickness of the braids around her head looked to be quite long; the seriousness of her great dark eyes was belied by uptilted corners of her wide, exquisitely carved Hawaiian mouth.

"This is Lala Kealoha," Troy said.

She smiled as Troy mentioned my name. "David Kimu has spoken often of you."

"Is David a friend of yours?"

"I've met him here a few times. But he is a long time *aikane* of my brother Umi."

"Do you live here?" I waved at the small village behind us.

"Not now. I have a waitress job in Lihue. I've been visiting my grandmother. Troy wanted to do some sketches and I stayed over a few days to pose for him." She turned to go. "I've got to fix *kaukau* for Keoni — he wants to start back as soon as he eats. See you later on Oahu."

"Where will she stay in Honolulu?" I asked Troy.

"With her brother. David took me to meet him the day after we were at your house. Suppose we *kaukau* too? Fish and *poi*?"

"You mean you really like it? Few tourists do."

"Never gave it any thought. That was what we had here and it tasted fine to me. Let's go."

We ate with the Hawaiian family Troy had been living with, a meal consisting of steamed *laulaus* (salt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

salmon, butterfish, and pork wrapped in *ti* leaves), *poi*, and coconut pudding. All this time I was wondering when Troy would mention his wife.

He finally did while we were waiting for Keoni. I sat in the shade as Troy stretched out, bare to the waist, in the sun nearby. "This feels good," he said; and then, quietly: "How's Mavis? I suppose she was the one who sent you."

"I haven't seen her. But the Garrisons told me she hasn't been feeling well, and I thought you should know."

"What's wrong with her?" His voice was completely emotionless.

When I told him he made no comment. Presently he said, still in that same flat voice, "Before we were married we planned to travel, have all kinds of adventures. The first six hundred we saved, we went to Mexico. Mavis hated it — the people, the heat, the little village where we stayed. She got dysentery and we had to come home. She was months getting over it. When medical bills began to pile up I took on a few commercial jobs to get us out of the hole. They liked my stuff. They paid — good Lord, how they paid!"

His face began to twitch. He rolled over and looked out at the green sea. "Can't get enough of this sun," he said. "Been soaking it up like a blotter since I came here."

Shortly after Troy came back, Mavis invited us to lunch and swim with them. We lay under an umbrella at Waikiki and chatted; or rather, Anne and I chatted with Mavis while Troy brooded at the horizon. When Mavis asked him once if he felt all right, he started and then said abstractedly of course he did, he was just going nuts watching the colors of that water.

It was a brilliant day and the Kanaka surf was running. Far, far out were the dark heads of swimmers waiting for the next big comber. Nearer shore the water was tranquil, a shimmering turquoise and emerald, jade and chrysoprase and tourmaline.

I said to Troy, "It's the reef that causes it."

He sent me a grateful look. "Variations in depth? Of course! Then the light makes different refractions. This light!" He almost groaned the words. "Those poor fools in New York are so used to living under a pall of soot that they never see —"

The rest was a mumble.

I didn't properly register his pronoun, because my attention switched to Mavis. "How do you keep that lovely golden color?" she was asking, admiring Anne's legs. "You're blonde, too. I just turn pink and my skin hurts."

"Difference in pigmentation, I suppose." Anne added generously, "Of course, my skin isn't nearly as delicate as yours."

I noticed then that Mavis's hair was streaked and faint spidery lines showed at the edge of her sun glasses. She was closer to Troy's forties than I'd realized.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When I mentioned this later to Anne she said, "I thought so, too. It's probably important to her to look young and fragile. I feel sorry for Mavis."

"Why?"

"Because she lives with a man who is completely creative, while she can create nothing."

"Artists aren't the only creative people in the world," I protested, surprised to find myself defending Troy's wife. "Building a good marriage, having children, those things are —" My voice faded. Then I said triumphantly, "How about that perfect apartment of theirs?"

Anne's bare shoulders moved. We were in the bedroom and she sat at the dressing table getting ready for guests who were coming to play Mah Jongg. She picked up her lipstick and leaned toward the mirror. "I had another letter from Leila Morgan yesterday. I meant not to show it to you for a while, but — it's in my white purse, hanging on the back of the closet door."

Part of the letter said: "Please tell Mrs. Purcell that her decorator was here recently to report success in finding a duplicate of the silver girandole which was stolen. He also said that he copied this decor for her, at her direction, from the Paris apartment of Madame Juliette Gauntier, the aunt who reared Mrs. Purcell. The decorator was touched by her sentimental desire to recreate the background of her childhood. You should have heard Hank howl when the man left. People envy us our luck in being here, they rave about Mavis Purcell's exquisite taste and originality. What tickles Hank is that he remembers doing a feature on her for his home town paper, the Milwaukee *Journal*. She had just been chosen one of those beer beauties, which gave her a start in modeling. Her name was Maria Schlanger then, and she'd never been nearer Paris than Milwaukee. . . ."

I sat and stared at Anne's reflection. She went on tying a ribbon around her hair and said nothing. "Where," I finally asked, "do you suppose she got the idea?"

"For the apartment? From a book of interiors, possibly, or some old copy of a Paris magazine. Don't look so shocked, Johnny. It's a harmless act. I wouldn't have shown you the letter if I hadn't been so pig-headed about making my point."

"You made it." I stood up. "I'm going to have a drink."

I made a double collins, then put on some records and sat down to finish my drink and wait for Anne. I couldn't concentrate — I was trying to remember some of the German I had picked up in the E.T.O. When I finally got it, what kept running fantastically through my mind was the fact that Schlanger means snake — and there are no snakes in Hawaii.

The next day Mavis called to announce that Troy was ready to go to work. "Those models have finally arrived. He's found a place in some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

valley where he wants to take you, to discuss illustrations for the first installment."

"What valley?" I asked, but she couldn't remember. I suggested picking Troy up and she said she would tell him to be ready. Mavis's voice sounded strained and I remembered Troy's habit of getting drunk before he began a job. The sooner he got that binge over with, the better we'd all feel.

The valley was Manoa, a favorite residential district of Oahu, but the road Troy took me on was one I might never have found without direction. We drove through the thickly settled section, past old houses deep in gardens, past newer modern dwellings and apartment buildings, to the head of the valley and a narrow lane which twisted up a hillside and ended at two frame cottages whose high foundations were deep in red ginger. A single hard-surfaced drive served both houses, widening toward separate garage buildings. Concrete steps led down from small rear porches, and on one of these a tall smiling man appeared and greeted us.

His name was Umi Kealoha, and Troy had been directed to him by David. Umi said, "Will you come in? My sister will be back soon."

We entered through the kitchen, which contained a stove, refrigerator, and chipped porcelain sink under the window overlooking the driveway. The rest of the house was equally simple, furnished with creaking wicker and dime-store curtains. Umi showed us the four rooms with a pride which I understood after learning that he had built both houses himself. He had a small orchestra which played for local parties and occasional night-club engagements. The identical house next door, he told us, had been occupied by his parents.

"They've gone back to Kauai," he said. "My father's a good mechanic but he doesn't like living in the city. And now our fishing *hui's* beginning to pay, so he can go home."

He explained that the Piper Cub which flew us to the village was part of a cooperative which the people had recently formed. They owned a sampan and the plane was used to spot schools of tuna, mullet, and red snapper which ran off the northern coast of the island. Keoni, who had learned to fly in the army, scouted at an altitude of about a thousand feet, and when he located a school of fish he dropped signals to the waiting sampan.

"Used to bring in five, sometimes six tons on a good day," Umi said. "Now they get eight and ten from a single school. Want to come out front? We're rehearsing."

We followed him to the *lanai* where in the sun three men sat with instruments. We listened while they played *Ke Kali Nei Au*, the Hawaiian Wedding Song.

Troy was restless. He finally asked, "Where's Lala?"

"She went swimming."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Troy's face showed disappointment. Umi said, "Not at the beach. Very near here. Want to go find her?"

He looked at our feet doubtfully. I began to unlace my sneakers, explaining to Troy, "The trail will be slippery. It rains almost every day here. Remember that rainbow we saw the morning you arrived?"

Troy's delight was out of proportion to the value of the information I gave him. "So it came from here?" He sat down immediately and removed his shoes. We rolled up trouser legs and started out.

Skidding and slipping, clutching branches of mountain apple and guava trees, we climbed the banks of the stream. As we pushed through thick growth of *ti* and ginger we heard the waterfall, and we heard voices, too. But when we reached the pool no one seemed to be there.

Troy cupped his hands and yelled, "Lala!"

She appeared from behind the falls, hastily tying a *lavalava* around her waist. "Oh, it's you," she said. She called over her shoulder, "Keoni. Come on out."

Keoni started toward us, laughing. "We thought it was strangers," he said. "No clothes!"

"Here!" She tossed shorts into the pool. He waded to shallow water and put them on.

"We're ready to start to work, Troy," Lala said. "Are you?"

"Yes," Troy answered.

And that was all. We never once discussed ideas for illustrating the first installment. I knew that what he painted would be right. And it was. It took him ten days to finish the two pictures which would be sent to the mainland immediately. When, after we congratulated him, Mavis commented that he generally worked much faster, he explained that light was sometimes poor at the pool and that the sittings had been interrupted by showers.

"Why don't you work here, then, instead of in that funny little shack?"

"I can't," he said. "It's got to be done there."

He did a lot of work in the cottage — background layouts, preliminary sketches, and so forth. Umi had offered him the house next door and Troy went there every day. He had the telephone connected so Mavis could reach him, and she brought a lunch once in a while and read novels while Troy worked.

At this point my new book came back from the publisher with suggestions for revisions and these necessitated a trip to Kona to check on background detail. I did a lot of running around there and then settled at the Volcano House to finish the rewrite, which took two long weeks. When I came home I asked Anne about the Purcells, and she brought me up to date while we had dinner.

"How's Troy?" I asked. "Did he have his binge?"

"Apparently," she said, "he has been too busy. Troy just sent the third group of illustrations off by air freight."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That was the beach scene. Where did he paint it? At Hanauma?"

"No. He decided on Waimea, where there are fewer people. The pictures were wonderful. But there was almost a tragedy that day."

"What happened?"

Anne told me briefly. The Garrisons had gone to Maui, where Bill was visiting one of his company's branch offices, and without their companionship Mavis was lonely. Troy suggested that since Waimea was on a side of the island which she had not seen, she should come along and they would have a picnic. While everybody was occupied, Troy at his easel and the Hawaiian group in poses he had given them, Mavis decided to go wading. She was knee-deep when a sudden gigantic wave knocked her down and the undertow caught her. Mavis's scream brought Troy running; he plunged in after her, only to be caught as she was. The Hawaiians made a chain of hands and rescued them, and when they were safe ashore Umi told Mavis that there was no reef at Waimea, the beach was posted *Unsafe for Swimming*. Hadn't she seen the warning sign? No, she hadn't, and it was not until they packed for the trip home that Troy discovered he had tossed his shirt over the warning sign when he set up his easel nearby.

"Is Mavis all right now?" I asked.

"She's had a shock. She doesn't say so but I think she wants to go home. She says the climate is affecting Troy, too; he has never taken so long over a job. And the month at Royal is up."

"What does Troy say?"

"He says they can move into the empty cottage next to Umi. It won't cost them anything. Mavis would be really isolated there —" Anne pushed her coffee cup aside. "I have an idea, Johnny. Troy insisted on no publicity, but — considering what is involved — suppose we call a few people and mention that the Purcells are in Honolulu?"

I was at the telephone before she finished speaking.

The following week there was a reception at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, to meet Troy Purcell. Then the Davis Galleries at Waikiki had a showing of local sketches Troy had made, plus layouts for the illustrations already finished. Troy was working that day, but Mavis presided prettily, wearing blue organza and an expression of wifely pride. Then we read about luncheons, bridge parties, and a tea in her honor. Finally we heard that the Purcells had moved to Manoa; the *Sunday Advertiser* devoted a page to photographs: Troy at his easel and Mavis in a silk kimono arranging anthuriums and hanging fishnet draperies around the windows of the cottage.

I went to see them that afternoon. Troy was working in the dining room, which had become his studio. Mavis was in the front room reading a book by William Roughead. Crossing their *lanai* I had heard music from the house next door; it was less audible in their living room, because windows on that side were closed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mavis seemed delighted to have a visitor. She called to Troy to mix some drinks, and he came out with a blank look. But he smiled when he saw me, and said, "You haven't been around for a long time. *Aloha*, John. *Pehea oe?*"

"I'm fine," I said. "How's the work going?"

"I'm almost finished." He turned to his wife with a puzzled expression. "What was it you told me to do?"

"Drinks, dear," she said, and he nodded and started to the kitchen.

"How do you like housekeeping in Hawaii?" I asked. Mavis said she liked it very much. The domestic problem was certainly simpler, wasn't it?

"We can get a gardener and maid here for half what I pay my cook at home. Lala cooks fairly well, too. Did you know that she is a high school graduate?"

"Really?" I felt that familiar rise of the hackles again. With the excuse of helping Troy, I went out to the kitchen. He was struggling with ice cubes from the battered trays in the old refrigerator.

"Make mine light," I told him. "We're going to a party tonight."

"Same for me," he said. "I've got work to do."

We heard laughter from the other house and Troy went to the screened door, hesitated, then came back. At my questioning look he said, "Thought I'd ask them over for a drink. They'd be glad to see you." He lowered his voice. "The gang used to come over often. Recently they've stayed away. For some reason, they're uncomfortable here."

I cast around for some acceptable excuse. "Is it since Mavis began decorating?"

He nodded and regarded me with that perplexed look he so often wore.

"It might be the fishnet," I said. "Many Hawaiians are superstitious, especially about fishing, probably because from early times their survival has depended largely on it. And since Keoni makes his living from fishing, and Mavis has —"

"*And what has Mavis done now?*"

Troy and I turned guiltily. Mavis stood in the doorway.

"Do tell me," she urged. "Troy knows that I wouldn't for the world do anything to offend his precious Hawaiians."

I could feel my face growing hot. "It's the fishnet on your windows. Many Hawaiians believe that a net should never be hung overhead, or draped around a room in any manner which suggests its actual use." I added lamely, "Of course, it is just superstition —"

"That doesn't matter," she said. "Troy will take it down."

The big man hesitated, holding our drinks. She took them from him and turned her back to us as she began setting glasses on a tray. "Go ahead, Troy." Her voice shook. "Take the net down. *Now.*"

Troy didn't say a word. He went into the front room, unhooked the net, carried it to the rear door, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tossed it outside. Then he came back and picked up his glass, still silent. I studied him, puzzled. There was a change in him I could not identify. He had lost a lot of weight and it could have been that, and his deep tan, which made him look more vital. No. There was something else. Then I realized — Troy had also lost his tic.

Mavis had been putting cheese crackers on a dish. She led us to the front room, carrying the tray. She handed me a drink, sipped her own, and said in a hostessy voice, "You know the Erickssons, I believe? I understand he is a very successful architect?"

"Yes," I said. "His wife was in Anne's graduating class at Punahou. They have a very beautiful house at Black Point."

"I've heard about it," she said. "They're giving a party for us tonight. We'll probably see you there."

We saw them there, but not for long. That was the night Troy got hilariously drunk and broke a table lamp when he tried to do a *hula*. Joe and Helen Ericksson helped Mavis get him into Umi's old car, and after they had gone Helen looked ruefully at the shattered lamp.

Her husband said, "I heard that Troy goes on a spree *before* he starts a job — but isn't he almost finished?"

"Yes. He is almost finished." For a moment I thought there was a significant tone in Anne's voice.

Half an hour later the telephone rang and Joe answered.

"Mavis? I hope you got home all right." He listened and said reassuringly, "If he shows up here we'll take good care of him. And we'll see that he gets back safely. You just go to bed and don't worry."

He hung up and explained, "Troy wouldn't go into the house with her, insisting he was having a fine time here and wanted to come back to the party. Before she could stop him, he started the car again and drove off. The poor girl is terribly concerned."

Troy never showed up. Our party was spoiled; we spent the balance of the evening in an atmosphere of strain, waiting for him. As we said good night to the Erickssons, Joe said, "I'm sorry we didn't get a chance to know Troy Purcell better. They'll be leaving soon, won't they?"

"Yes," I answered, and added fervently to myself, "I certainly hope so."

Another week went by. Anne told me one day, when I came out of my office at the end of a morning's work: "David called. We're invited to a *luau* tomorrow. At Waimanalo. Given by the Kealohas."

"Swell! What's the occasion?"

"It's a double celebration. For Troy, because he has delivered the last illustration. And for Lala. She and Keoni are getting married."

So that was why Umi's orchestra had been rehearsing the wedding song. "I didn't know," I said. "When?"

"As soon as they return to Kauai. Keoni is leaving immediately. Lala

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will stay long enough to buy her kitchen equipment and a trousseau."

"With the money she got for modeling," I said slowly. "Does Troy know?" At Anne's shrug I said, "I'm going to call him and see what I can find out."

All I found out was that Troy seemed in a high mood.

"My check's on the way," he said. "Tomorrow's the day we really 'go for broke.' Why don't you ride over with us? You haven't lived until you've traveled in our jalopy. Vintage 1936. Bought it for sixty-five dollars from Umi's father."

The Purcells arrived just after the mailman, and we saw that Troy had not exaggerated the condition of his car. It was an ancient Chevrolet with battered fenders and rattling doors which Anne and I regarded with suspicion as we rounded sharp turns down the Pali road. The doors stayed closed, however, and we stowed our beach bags at each side of ourselves and braced together in the center, being careful of the flat package which stood against the driver's seat.

"What is it?" I asked, and all Troy would say was, "Surprise. You'll see later."

The old car chugged along and Troy sang jubilantly, "Oh, we're going to a *hukilau*, a *huki, huki, huki, huki hukilau.*"

Anne and I exchanged glances, wondering if his ebullience could be genuine.

Mavis seemed happy, too. She glanced back and chattered about furnishing the cottage: she had found some nice little bamboo tables, she said, and Grossman-Moody had really wonderful fabrics — she thought of using hand-blocked linen in a *ti*-leaf design.

"We'll paint the floors dark green," she told us. "And with *lauhala* mats and some reed furniture, with our Kelly etching and the Tennant and a few of Troy's things, it will be quite charming."

"Aren't you spending a lot of effort," Anne asked, "on someone else's house?"

Mavis turned completely around then, and her smile was very bright. "Oh, it's going to be our house. That's what Troy plans to use his check for."

"And when we sell the stuff we left in New York," Troy called back, "we'll get a new car. This heap's going to be put out to pasture."

We had begun to descend the steepest section of the road and he held the hand-brake as he drove. "She froze once," he said. "Nearly scared us both to death. We had started to a party —"

"That was the night we went to the Erickssons," Mavis put in.

"What a night *that* was!" Troy said. "As we started out, I parked on the drive and went back to close the garage door; Umi's father left tools there and we keep it locked. The car rolled down the drive and the hand-brake stuck. Mavis tried to cut off the motor and yanked the key out instead. This girl's a quick

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thinker. She jerked the wheel and landed against a papaya tree at the bottom of the road. You should have heard those melons squashing!"

"And you should have heard me scream!" Mavis said. "The brake is all right now. I had it fixed." She added fondly, "Troy is utterly hopeless about remembering things."

The drive to Waimanalo took over an hour. During that time neither of the Purcells mentioned Lala and Keoni, or the second reason why the Kealohas were celebrating with a *luau*.

There was a crowd by the time we arrived. At the side of the house a long table had been contrived by laying planks across wooden trestles. Hawaiian women moved leisurely about in cotton *holokus*, arranging fern fronds and hibiscus blossoms on the bare wood, laying fresh *ti* leaves in the center which they filled with speckled mangoes, bananas, and pineapples. They gossiped and joked, exchanging remarks in a mixture of pidgin, Hawaiian, and phrases of English.

"Isn't the table pretty!" Mavis exclaimed, and turned to one of the women. "Do you think I could help?"

"Sure. Ask in the kitchen. There's plenty to do."

Mavis went toward the rear of the house and I stared after her. Troy's wife had certainly suffered a sea-change. Anne was looking at her too, and Anne's face was sober. She met my glance and shrugged, then caught my hand.

"Let's change, shall we?"

We got into bathing suits and went down to the beach where Archie Kamaka had already prepared the pit. People were rushing back and forth, heaping fuel on the nearby fire which heated the stones. Archie raked coals aside and nodded; the rocks were red. Next came the ritual of putting the pigs into the *imu*.

Reverent assistants scraped fire from the rocks. Archie, scowling in concentration, dipped into a calabash of cold water and snatched a stone which he flung into the pit. More followed until the *imu* was lined with hot stones; then fresh banana leaves were laid over them and the pigs carefully placed in the center. Their sides were braced with red yams, packages of *laulau* were added, and breadfruit and bananas and crayfish and small mysterious bundles wrapped in leaves, until at last hot rocks were stuffed into the middles of the pigs and the whole was covered with leaves, more rocks, a layer of wet burlap, and shovelfuls of sand.

"Hey! Isn't this something?" The Garrisons had joined us. "My mouth is watering already," Bill said. "How long will it take to cook?"

"Three or four hours." That was David Kimu, coming to greet us.

I heard Peggy's indrawn breath as she saw David, who had just come out of the water. Wet black hair curled on his head, muscles rippled in his thighs as he moved toward us, wearing a red *malo:* He winked at Anne and me, fully aware of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sensation he was causing. Peggy stammered that it was delightful to see him again and avoided looking at her husband, whose *opu* bulged over Polynesian print shorts.

"The idea," David told them, "is to keep busy. We're about ready for the *hukilau*. Come along to the water." He led us seaward, explaining to Bill that *huki* means pull and *lau* means leaf, from the *ti* leaves which are used to frighten fish into the net.

At the shore a crowd had gathered, and we saw Troy there, with Lala. They were watching Keoni and two other men launch a boat loaded with the long net which would be dropped in a horseshoe pattern into the sea. Anne and I walked behind the Garrisons and we heard Peggy say, "Is that his famous model? What's so terrific about her?"

Her husband chuckled. "Take another look, Peg."

Lala was wearing an old woolen bathing suit which was mended in moth-eaten spots. It was tight on her, but Lala was indifferent to that. Her long hair blew into her face and she brushed it back and laughed and said something to Troy. The net was being dropped and he picked it up and they took hold, Troy's hands grasping the rope behind hers.

Bill muttered, "Now I understand why Troy forgets everything but his art."

Peggy's voice was sharp with spite. "It's a good thing he has Mavis to handle his affairs for him. Otherwise he might find himself in a mess."

We caught up the net and waited for the boat to return.

"Troy insisted the other day he doesn't want to keep up his policy." Bill seemed to feel a need to explain his wife's remark. "He's carrying thirty thousand life, and claims he won't be making enough in the future to meet payments. I tried to convince him he was crazy, but evidently it took Mavis to bring him to his senses. When I reported to the home office, they wrote back that they had just received his check for the premium."

We had taken our places behind the Garrisons; now we moved forward as the boat finished its slow circle and dropped the last of the net. Peggy began to squeal with excitement. Under cover of her noise, Anne said to me, "I want to talk to you."

I left the group and followed Anne to the house. We sat in the shade and lit cigarettes. Anne's face was serious as she watched the group on the sand. Keoni squatted with shoulders bent over the mullet he held; bright scales flew from his knife. Lala was beside him and Troy knelt opposite. They laughed, then their faces sobered at something Troy said and Lala put her hand on Troy's arm and spoke very solemnly. Keoni looked at Troy and nodded. The young couple seemed to be making some kind of promise.

Anne said, "I don't like this."

"What don't you like?"

"This situation between them."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Between whom? Troy and Lala?"

"Between Troy and his wife. They are trying — at least, she is trying — to make us believe something which is phony."

My wife was not a worrier by nature. I asked, "What do you mean, 'phony'?"

"I don't believe they really agree about staying in the Islands."

"Do you think he'll change his mind?"

"I think Mavis will try to change it for him. If she isn't able to do that . . . I wish I knew how he really feels about Lala."

"Well," I said, rising, "there's one way to find out. Let's ask David."

Before we could talk to David we were interrupted by the arrival of one of the most honored guests. A very old Hawaiian lady appeared and was greeted by shouts of welcome. She was Lala's grandmother, come from Kauai that day to give her blessing to the young couple. Kaahumanu Kaiulani Kealoha was snowy-haired and dignified, the purple *holoku* she wore hung loose on her tall, thin body. She embraced Lala and hung around her neck a *lei* of *mokihana* and *maile* from their valley home; she went through the same ceremony with Keoni.

Then she was seated in a canvas chair while David announced, "It is time to drink a toast, to drink many toasts!" There was a buzz of agreement and paper cups were handed around. The first toast was to Lala's grandmother, with congratulations for her bravery in making the trip to our island by plane; her first and probably her last flight.

Then we drank to Lala and Keoni and wished them happiness and success with the fishing *hui* and many children.

And last, to Troy, who laughed with delight and when he finished his drink said, "Now I have a small gift for my two friends. To remember this time, and because —" he put an arm around each of them and finished: "*Me ke aloha pau ole.*"

My love for you will never die.

David handed him the package we had brought in the car, and when Troy unwrapped it everyone moved forward to admire his gift.

It was a portrait of Lala and Keoni, in the pool near the cottage. Both were naked, as Troy must often have seen them. Lala was sitting at the edge of the pool, leaning slightly backward and laughing as Keoni knelt and fastened ginger blossoms in her hair. Scattered around them and floating on the water were petals of white ginger.

This was a new Troy girl — without a yearning look.

Anne and I had moved to the edge of the group. Anne whispered, "Look!" and I glanced toward the house.

Mavis stood there, clutching to her chest the tray from which she had just been serving drinks. She seemed frozen in that position. Her eyes were narrowed, her lips curled back in open hatred. I averted my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eyes and muttered to Anne, "I'm beginning to see what you mean."

Announcement of the engagement sparked hilarity. Umi's boys began to play and everyone called to the engaged couple for a *hula*. Lala protested but finally went into the house and came out in a yellow *holoku*, a circle of flame hibiscus on her head and around her throat. Keoni joined her. Then they began a courtship dance, the kind of dance the tourist never sees.

Smiling, dark eyes shining, they faced each other with knees bent and worked down with hips moving in a figure-eight; then they rose slowly. Keoni began to circle as Lala did the *olappa*, the measured sway of her body accompanied by voluptuous undulation of hips while her knees lifted sharply in counter-accent and the train of her *holoku* jerked across the sand.

The boys chanted the song; a woman offering herself, reciting to her lover her own charms, clinging lips and warm breasts and encircling arms, the yearning and fire of her flesh; watchers grew tense as Lala's fingertips caressed her brown skin; when she lifted her eyes to Keoni in challenge he let out an exultant cry and moved toward her in frankly mating motions while onlookers held their breaths. They finished side by side, panting, and the crowd yelled.

Then, to uproarious applause, Troy began to dance. He didn't do badly, and what he lacked in grace and technique he made up in enthusiasm as he courted Lala's delighted grandmother. The old lady simpered, she made mock protestations of modesty, and finally she rose and finished the dance as his partner.

Troy came over to us a few minutes later, his face flushed. "Having a good time?"

"Wonderful. We think your picture is wonderful, too."

"I've never enjoyed doing one more. How about a drink? I'm taking it easy, this is one party where I don't want to miss a moment. But let me bring you something."

"Thanks, Troy, but we're doing fine—"

Yells from the vicinity of the *imu* indicated that the big moment had arrived. Troy started running, eager as a child.

As we walked toward it, Anne said, "While I was changing into my suit I read a letter that came just as we left the house. It was from Leila Morgan."

"Is she feeling better?"

"Yes. She mentioned how sorry they are to hear that the Purcells have changed their mind about giving up the apartment."

"But Mavis said—" I had stopped dead still. Anne caught my elbow and urged me forward.

"That is what she *said*." Her voice was low. "I wish we knew when Troy made the final decision about staying here."

"We can ask David. We were going to ask him anyway."

"That isn't necessary now."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I had decided the same thing. If Troy were in love with Lala he would never have painted her with Keoni. Troy was in love, yes. He had fallen in love with life. I wondered whether Mavis understood this.

We looked for David, but he was helping at the *imu*. Archie, who took full advantage of his dramatic moment, was waiting while his helpers scraped away the sand. He posed with impressive dignity, straining the patience of his audience to the limit as they stared at steam rising from the pit. Then with a magnificent flourish he swept aside brown and wilted leaves to reveal the roasted pigs, sizzling with fat, emitting savory vapors. A concerted hungry moan rose to the evening sky.

"*Hele mai e ai!*" a woman called. Come and eat! The crowd broke ranks and rushed for places.

Four men carried the pigs on huge *koa* platters carved with supporting feet, and set their steaming burden in the center of the table. Lala's grandmother rose and there was a hush as she began to chant, first a *kuauhau*, the genealogy of the family, then a long prayer for the happiness of the young couple. She finished and sat down, food was passed, and the feast was on. *Imu* pork, white and succulent inside crackling brown skin, red yams with the sweetness of honey, steamed mullet, chicken in coconut milk, briny *laulaus*, baked bananas, tender crabmeat, cool lavender *poi* which blended perfectly with other flavors.

Troy and Mavis sat near Lala's grandmother, opposite Lala and Keoni. The Garrisons were beside them, then, there was Umi, who beamed at the success of his sister's party. Anne and I had taken seats next to David. Mavis, I noticed, picked at her food; Troy ate as if famished. Drinks were passed during dinner and he emptied several glasses. David caught me watching this and said, "We tipped off the bartender. Troy's drinking ginger ale."

I said, "David. I want to talk to you after dinner."

He gave me an odd look. "Okay."

But after dinner it was difficult to find David. Night had come by then and torches had been lit and tied to several posts. Anne and I looked among rocks, behind the house, and along the shore where the light did not reach. "Do you think he's avoiding us?" I asked.

"Perhaps. We've got to find him."

I called his name several times, and finally David stepped out of the shadows. "What do you want?"

"We're worried about the Purcells," Anne told him. "Do you know when Troy decided definitely to buy the house from Umi?"

"Two weeks ago," David said. "Maybe longer than that. I'm not sure. Why?"

"The date is important."

David shrugged. "Maybe Lala can tell you. She saw Troy every day."

Anne started immediately toward where Lala and Keoni stood. They were near the steps of the *lanai*, hold-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing hands as they watched a fat, giggling Hawaiian woman dancing opposite wizened Archie Kamaka in a very wicked *hula*. Troy was with the musicians; he chanted with each chorus.

David started to walk away and I followed. "You knew what might happen when you sent Troy to Kauai. Why did you do it?"

David turned. Torchlight flared behind him, silhouetting his body. For a moment he was David the primitive, the perfect native specimen Mavis had labeled him. But it was David the civilized who answered. "He asked for it."

"But his wife —"

David's voice was harsh. "She won't stay. Soon she'll hate it — and us and everything we mean to him — even more than she does now."

"Then it can't possibly work out. She's his wife."

David jerked his head toward the house. Mavis, dainty in her white dress, was passing drinks to the Garrisons on a tray, then carrying one to Troy, laying an affectionate hand on his shoulder as she offered it.

David looked at me. He made a gesture with his two hands like a man twisting the neck of a barnyard fowl and flinging it to the ground to flap its life out. He wheeled and left.

When I reached the house, Anne had drawn Lala aside and they were sitting together on the steps. As I joined them Anne said, "She doesn't know me very well, Johnny. Please talk to her."

I sat down beside Lala. "We wanted to ask about Troy and his wife."

"Yes?" Her lids dropped and she was remote.

I began again. "We know that Troy loves you very much, Lala."

She looked up with quick protest and I went on, "We know what kind of *aloha* Troy has for you. Please do not misunderstand. We're glad for Troy, that he is so happy here. But we're concerned about his wife. Do you think she really wants to stay?"

Lala said suddenly, "No! She has said that she will not stay. I heard her tell him so."

"When was this?"

"Two weeks ago." Lala began to speak rapidly in a low voice. "I heard her tell him she will not stay, she cannot endure this place. She wants to go home, she says, where they can live like civilized human beings."

"How could you know this?" Anne demanded.

"We live next door. The first time I heard them they had a terrible fight. That was the day Troy told Umi he will buy the house and will pay cash for it when his check comes from the magazine. She yelled at him that night. Troy told her to shut up but she kept on yelling. Finally he rushed out of the house and went up to the pool and stayed until very late. The next day she started again. This time she was more quiet."

"Then how could you hear what she said? Did you listen deliberately?"

"Yes. Keoni and I — Troy still had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

posing for us to do, and we needed the money. I was afraid she might persuade him to leave. So I listened. I went to the windows on the other side of their house, the side away from ours. I heard everything."

"What did you hear?"

"Troy told her he wanted a divorce. He said she could go home, and according to Territorial law he could divorce her for desertion after a year and nothing would be in the papers. She could have what was in their New York bank account and all the furniture. She said their savings wouldn't last her six months. He was very angry that night. He said she could sell some of the expensive trash she had bought and have enough to live on for two years. They had a big fight."

"What else?"

"Nothing."

"What do you mean, Lala? No more fighting?"

"That's right. Next day I listened again, but they had made up. She told him she didn't want a divorce, she loved him and only wanted him to be happy. He said that if she really meant it she would stay here with him and make a new life, that he never knew how to live until he came here. When she said living costs as much in Honolulu as in New York, he told her it depends on what you mean by living. He could sell enough of his paintings, he said, or he could take on a commercial job once in a while, and they would be comfortable. Then they made up."

"What happened after that?"

"Nothing. Troy worked every day, he finished the paintings."

"What did Mavis do?"

"When she was home she stayed in the house, reading. She went out a lot. Shopping, she said, getting ideas for furnishing the house. And she went to parties. I pressed all her clothes one day. She has beautiful clothes."

"And she and Troy never had another argument?"

"No." Lala stood up. "But I don't believe she will stay here long. She is an empty woman. It takes a lot of money to fill her kind of emptiness, and then it is never filled."

We watched as she went to join Keoni. He asked a question and she shook her head and smiled, and then they disappeared in the crowd.

"Let's walk," Anne said. We headed for the beach.

As we paced up and down we heard behind us the voices of singers, occasional shouts of laughter, cries of "*Kani ka pila!*" On with the music. The *luau* was just warming up.

Anne clung to my arm. Her bare shoulder brushed mine as we walked. "Before you joined us I asked Lala if she remembered the night Troy got drunk at the Erickssons'. She did remember it because that was the time the car rolled down the hill, and they saw how frightened Troy was when he ran after it. I think it was shock which made him drink that night."

"But why is that — any of it — significant now?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What I really wanted to know from her was where Troy went after he got into the car alone and started off again. Johnny, he didn't leave — *he didn't go anywhere!* Lala said they heard the Purcells come in that night. Troy was singing and Mavis told him to be quiet. He went into the house with her, meek as a lamb, and went to bed."

I stopped in my tracks. "Then she told a deliberate lie! She even called the Erickssons to say how worried she was. Now that I think of it, it was out of character for Mavis. She's not the confiding type."

Anne urged me into motion and we walked again. "No," she agreed, "she's not the confiding type, nor does she act on impulse, as Troy does. That story to the Erickssons was a calculated dramatization, a plant of some kind. And for some definite reason."

We paced in silence for a while. "Tell me," Anne said then, "what Bill Garrison was saying to you about Troy's insurance."

"You were behind me. You heard him."

"Not every word."

I slowed my step, scuffing damp sand as I concentrated.

"First, Peggy said it was a good thing Troy has Mavis to manage his affairs. Then Bill explained that Troy carries life insurance of thirty thousand and had told him he wanted to drop it because he doesn't expect to earn enough in the future to keep up the payments. Bill argued with Troy but couldn't persuade him to change his mind. Later he heard from the home office that they had received Troy's check."

"Troy's check — or hers?"

"He didn't say — why should he? Maybe they have a joint account. What difference does that make, anyhow?"

"At this point, none, probably." Anne shivered.

I knew she couldn't be cold. I stopped and pulled her into my arms and kissed her. She clung tight for a moment and then moved back and caught my hand and we walked on.

Anne began to think aloud. "Mavis has paid up Troy's insurance — or persuaded him to do so. She has written to the Morgans — Leila's letter was dated five days ago and she had just heard from Mavis — giving them notice to move because she wants the apartment. Yet today she lets us believe that she intends to stay here. She doesn't contradict Troy when he mentions selling their furniture in New York and using the money to buy a car. She talks about decorating the cottage and says their new home will be charming." She gripped my hand tight and said, "I don't like it, Johnny! Especially after what we saw on her face this evening."

"When you bring the facts together that way, I don't like it either," I admitted. "That naked hatred when she looked at Troy and Lala — it might be just the girl she hates. And Lala is leaving soon. Perhaps after she goes Mavis will get over it."

"I don't think she will," Anne

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

insisted. "She's not young any more. She's invested years of effort manipulating Troy, building the kind of life she wants for them both. Now the entire structure is threatened. And in spite of her pretty manners, she is capable of violence. Lala said she screamed at Troy in fury. That must have been one of her few unguarded moments. Now she's docile. But she spends her time reading stories of murder."

"That's as good a sublimation as any."

"Don't be an idiot. It's only in psychology books that sublimation really works."

"All right," I said. "What can we do? What can anybody do?"

We had turned and were headed toward the party again. "I don't know," Anne said. Automatically we quickened our pace.

When we rejoined the crowd we saw neither Troy nor his wife. We went to the table, now serving as a bar, then through the house to the kitchen, and back to the *lanai*. There we ran into Umi.

"Looking for Troy?" he said. "He just left."

An old man on the grass near us cackled approval. "Troy plenty *ona-ona*. Had one fine time."

"Was he really drunk?" I asked.

"He was stiff!" Bill Garrison told us from the steps. "We just poured him into the car and Mavis took him home. Never saw anything happen faster. One minute he's sitting here with this glass in his hand, singing — the next, he's flat on his face. No wonder, after all the liquor he took aboard."

Anne and I avoided looking at each other. We were both remembering what Troy had said about not wanting to drink, and what David had told us about the straight ginger ale.

"Don't worry about Troy," Bill said. "He'll be all right. The fresh air'll sober him up on the way home. And Mavis is a good driver."

"Of course," Anne said. She sank to the steps of the *lanai* where Troy had recently been sitting. "Give me a cigarette, Johnny."

As soon as Bill and Umi had wandered off, she stood up. "Let's go after them."

"We haven't a car."

"Take David's. Take the first one we find. But hurry!"

We took David's car without permission. Anne opened the glove compartment as we started.

"What are you putting in there?" I asked.

"The glass Troy drank from. When we get as far as Kaneohe I want to telephone."

I pressed the accelerator. At Kaneohe, Anne reported no answer from Troy's house or Umi's. "All the Kealohas are at the party, of course. And Mavis probably hasn't had time to get home yet. Are we taking the Pali road?"

"It's quicker — if it doesn't start to rain when we get there."

The rain started when we were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

halfway up the long, winding drive. It didn't rain hard; there was just a blowing mist which clouded the windshield and made the road like glass. We drove in silence and Anne said nothing as we skidded on curves; nor did she grab at the door when we scraped, once, against stones of the outside wall.

When we reached the summit we were in a downpour. Wind rocked the car as we made the turn and started down. It had taken us almost an hour, slowed as we were by the weather. We were possibly twenty minutes behind Mavis, and in that much time anything could happen — or could be made to happen — to Troy.

My thoughts went back and forth with the clack of the windshield wipers. One minute I thought this whole thing was preposterous and we were acting like idiots; next I recapitulated everything we knew plus what we surmised, and I was sure we would be too late.

We found a filling station on Nuuanu Avenue and Anne was out of the car even before it stopped. She was inside for quite a while and I watched her through the window as she spoke over the phone. She came back with a set look on her face and said, "I reached her."

"What did she say?"

"She was hysterical. She called me a fool. But when I told her we have the glass Troy drank from — and that several witnesses remembered her giving it to him — then she was scared. Let's go to the house now."

We turned at last up the steep drive which led to the cottage, and I parked near the path to the front door. The house was lighted, but when we knocked there was no answer. We waited and listened but heard no sound other than the drip of water from the eaves and the soughing of trees in the wind which swept down the valley. We knocked again and called, then tried the door and found it unlocked. We walked in.

The living room was empty. The wicker table by the side of the broken-springed couch was piled with magazines; there was a manicuring set, a filled ashtray, and an empty glass with cigarette butts in it. We went into the bedroom. It was lighted and empty. Troy's grass slippers, one strap torn loose, were half under the bed. It gave me a queer feeling to see them. The white dress Mavis had worn was tossed on a chair and her white sandals lay close by.

On the dresser were jars and cosmetics of all descriptions. A bottle of liquid cleansing cream lay smashed on the floor, as if the woman who was using it had dropped it there, perhaps, when she heard the telephone ring. We went into the kitchen and found the screen door half ajar; light from the room streamed out over the small rear landing onto steps which led to the concrete driveway.

It was there we found Mavis.

We saw first her naked legs, then the shell pink satin of the dressing gown which had spread over her face when she tripped and sprawled head-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

first down the steps. She lay still, in that final stillness which is death. But we heard a sound.

It was the familiar sound of the ancient car which had chugged so faithfully as it carried us to the *luau*.

"The garage!" Anne cried. "Quick! Open the door!" As I went to it she ran around the side of the building.

The door was padlocked. I heard breaking glass, and then Anne came back and said, "The window is nailed. Can't you get the door open?"

While I tugged at the hasp she went to Mavis's body and snatched the key from her outflung hand. I took it and opened the lock.

Anne untied the halter top of her bathing suit and thrust it at me. "Be careful, Johnny. Hold this over your nose while you turn off the ignition —"

But there was no key in the ignition. The motor chugged on, while I dragged Troy's sagging body out of the car and across the garage floor to fresh air and Anne shut the garage doors again. "He's breathing," I said when she turned. "He can't have been in there long. He'll probably be all right once we get him to the hospital. I'll go phone."

As I reached for the screen door I was dimly aware that Anne was leaning over Mavis's body. Then I almost tripped over a high-heeled satin mule. Mavis should have known better than to rush down a flight of steps in high heels, I thought, as I went into the house.

When I came out Troy's breathing sounded normal and his face looked less pink. We left him lying on the damp grass and went to sit on the steps of Umi's cottage. I helped Anne tie her halter back on, and we moved very close together. After a while she stopped shivering.

We didn't hunt for the ignition key. Later, after disconnecting some wires to stop the motor, police found it in the pocket of Mavis's dressing gown.

As we waited, Anne and I began to talk.

The story Mavis had planned to tell seemed fairly obvious, we decided, remembering the one she had already told the Ericksons. Troy had "refused" to enter the house, and she left him in the car to sleep off his "drunk." He had revived and decided to go back to the party, had started the motor, and then passed out again — while Mavis slept. The next day — or the next hour, it did not matter — she would become alarmed and go to the garage and find him.

"By the time she'd have called the police," Anne said, "the door would be open, of course, and the key back in the ignition. She must have taken the idea from a newspaper, or from one of those stories she read."

"She would never have got away with it."

"She might have. A pretty woman, a good lawyer, and a husband with a reputation for drinking heavily? And even if she were convicted —" Anne

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

let out a long, ragged sigh — "that wouldn't have done Troy any good."

She looked at her hands, which were dirty, and went to brush them across the wet grass. When she sat beside me again I said, "Hey, kid. Your legs are all streaked, as if you'd been carrying —" I looked at Mavis's body, then I squared around. "Anne. You moved something away from there. What was it?"

Instead of answering directly, she said, "Johnny, do you remember the things we heard about Troy and Mavis — the two accidents they almost had?"

"Once when she was nearly drowned, and he went in after her —"

"That was the time Troy 'absent-mindedly' hung his shirt over the warning sign at the beach."

I was beginning to get the idea. "— and then the hand-brake on the car froze, the night Troy got drunk!"

"Mavis told us earlier today that the brake didn't work because Troy 'forgot' to have it repaired. It might be interesting to know whether there were other instances of Troy's 'absent-mindedness' before they left New York, or whether his need to be rid of his incubus crystallized only after they came here. But the point is — the *third* time Troy tried to murder his wife, he was successful."

"*Anne, what was it you moved?*"

"Remember, you told them of the superstition about hanging a fishnet in the house?"

"Sure. Mavis ordered Troy to take it down. And he tossed it —" I looked with horror at the steps down which Mavis had tumbled to her death.

"Yes," Anne said. "I removed the net."

Before I could say anything Troy stirred, and we heard him groan.

Then the ambulance arrived.

NEXT MONTH . . .

Five prize-winning stories, including:

John D. MacDonald's I ALWAYS GET THE CUTIES
Peter Godfrey's HAIL AND FAREWELL

together with seven other fine tales of crime and detection, including:

Agatha Christie's HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?
Erle Stanley Gardner's THE CANDY KID
Jack London's ONLY A CHINAGO

and an EQMM "Discovery," by the author of THE WIZARD OF OZ!—

L. Frank Baum's THE SUICIDE OF KIAROS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRIZE-WINNING STORY

Another original for our* Black Mask *department . . .

It is only fair to warn you that Dion Henderson's "Payment in Full" is an uncommon story indeed, written in an unusual style. But we earnestly suggest that you stick with it, and once the author's individualistic style gets under your skin, you will feel its great power and impact. This is a tough 'tec about a tough guy, and in the genuinely realistic tradition of tough stories; indeed, it may be one of the toughest 'tecs about a tough character you have ever read — and without the slightest help from the kind of sex, sadism, or sensationalism that so many contemporary hardboiled tales suffer from. This is a story of violence, yes — but not violence for the sake of shock alone; the violence stems from credible circumstances and characters. Murder, you will discover, can be a matter of mathematics.

The author is a mysterious personage.-Three times we tried to get in touch with him, and were unable to elicit a single response. We know nothing whatever of the man who calls himself Dion Henderson. Obviously, he prefers to remain in total obscurity, and surely that is his privilege. But after reading "Payment in Full," we'd bet he has an interesting background or interesting ideas . . .

PAYMENT IN FULL

by DION HENDERSON

WHILE THEY WERE WAITING FOR "the man called Numbers" to be brought up from Security, the reporter tried to find out more about him from the warden. It did not work out very well, mostly because of the two police officers from the city who were there with them. The warden was especially formal when police officers were present. His whole career was built on trouble, and since the law was at the bottom of it all he sometimes felt about the law the way a professional soldier feels about war.

Later, when the officers were in the administration office, the reporter tried again to learn something about the man called Numbers. "What do you expect of a man," he asked the warden, "who has killed a cop and served seven years for it?"

The warden looked wry and said, "That is a pretty good question, but I have a better one: what do you expect of a man who did *not* kill a cop but has served seven years anyway?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The reporter suddenly became very tense, but they were in the kitchen of the prison and before he could ask for the answer to such an important question, the chief cook came toward them wiping his hands on his apron. "Have a cup of coffee, Warden?" he asked, and a thick white mug of steaming coffee materialized out of nowhere. Once the chef had been an amateur cook and a professional magician; now his activities were reversed, but he still liked to do tricks for the warden. As a result, the reporter lost his biggest opportunity to find out something important about the man called Numbers, coming just close enough to understand that there *was* something important. The reporter was so vexed by the cook-magician that he did not realize until much later that the magician part was important too. As it was, a messenger reached them before the warden finished his coffee and they left the kitchen.

On the way down the corridor the warden said, "You mustn't worry; maybe I don't know the answer."

A guard brought the man called Numbers into the visitors' reception room. The reporter had not seen him for seven years. He did not look tough — at least, not until he looked at the police officers and recognized the one who was a sergeant. His face did not change much, but enough to see that he was tough all right.

The sergeant said, "Hello, cop-killer."

The warden did not like that, but soon they would be "outside" where he couldn't do anything about it, so he did not make an issue of it. He said to the man called Numbers, "I can't help you any more once you're through the gate."

"You can't help me anyway," Numbers said. "It's a matter of mathematics."

The warden started to say something, then hesitated, and in the pause the sergeant said harshly, "All right, let's go." Something was pushing the sergeant hard and it showed in his harshness: his partner had been killed in a gunfight — the same gunfight that put the man called Numbers in prison for seven years. No cop would ever forgive Numbers: seven years were not enough to pay for a dead cop. They had only got Numbers for second degree and when he had become eligible for parole the week before, they had promptly filed a burglary detainer on him. Cops could forget the little things — the easy ones like burglary that you can hang on any big loser; but they would never forget the man called Numbers, because there is no degree of being a dead cop.

The warden did not go out with them. He wanted no more of this. A guard on the other side of the inner gate turned a big old-fashioned key, and they went through, stopped, and waited until he had locked the gate again and put the key away; then the guard took another key and opened the outer gate. They did not let you forget it was a prison.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They were now out of the administration building and going down the walk between the lawns that were very beautiful, both as lawns and as fields of fire for the riflemen in the towers on the Wall. At the main gate they waited again while the guard inside opened the first door, closed it, and locked it behind them. After that he opened the last door and the detective who drove for the sergeant went out to get the car. The guard locked the gate behind him.

All this while the reporter was trying to think of an answer to the question about the man called Numbers. A few answers occurred to him and he thought perhaps he was close to something when suddenly the sergeant took the manacles out of his pocket.

"Stick 'em out, cop-killer."

Numbers said evenly, "You better lock them behind me. There'll be only two of you with me."

He said that, and the next instant there was a welt rising on his face from the handcuffs, and rising with the welt was the wild naked look you do not often see unless you watch men wanting to kill other men.

Recollection of his job moved up closer in the reporter's mind and he said, "Now look, I have to write a story about this trip."

"You don't want to do that," the sergeant said.

"The hell you say." The reporter did not have to remind the sergeant that cops do not tell reporters what to write about.

"Every week —" and the sergeant's voice was quite different now, "— every week I stop around and see Joe's widow and one of the kids got polio and she was crying and what she said to me was 'Why did Joe ever want to be a cop?' " Then after a moment the sergeant said, "She never asked me nothing like that before, not the whole seven years."

He took Numbers's right hand, put the cuff on it, and closed the other on his own left wrist. The reporter was filled with unexpected alarm; he did not know why, he could not even imagine why. He took a step forward but felt foolish about it, and anyway the squad car was pulling up in front. The other officer got out and the sergeant led the way, and all the while the reporter had the frantic feeling that he was about to remember everything he needed to answer the warden's question and that for some reason it would be too late.

They were beside the car, a police special, a two-door with the engine running and the door at the curb open. The driver stood behind Numbers and the sergeant started climbing into the car ahead of him, awkwardly because of the handcuffs. It all happened like slow motion, but so shockingly fast and smooth that the reporter could not budge; yet his mind phrased this orderly sentence: This man called Numbers is left-handed, and he worked in the kitchen with a magician, and somehow these things have a bearing on the answer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the question of what to expect from the ex-con.

The cop behind Numbers had reached past him to hold the seat back and Numbers had reached forward under the cop's coat with his left hand and slipped the gun out of the harness — and then shot the cop while the snub barrel was still pushed up against his armpit. It made hardly any noise, but when the cop's body fell out of the car his coat was burning a little. The sergeant was hunched over, partly turned aside, with one arm stuck out beside him; his mouth came open but nothing came out because Numbers shot him once in the body and an instant later, as though there was something there he did not want to see any more, he shot the sergeant in the face. The reporter still stood there when the hand with the revolver came around and the front end of it, a .357, was as big as all the world.

"Drive," Numbers said. "Now."

The sound of his voice was what started time moving again. The reporter slid under the wheel and as the car started he saw that not even the guard behind the gate six feet away had moved. They had made it down the block and had turned away from the prison onto another street before a tower guard got into action. Numbers found the key to the manacles in the sergeant's pocket and freed his wrist. After that he leaned forward holding the .357 in the split between the seats. The reporter thought that perhaps later he would be very angry with himself, but right now he did not feel any rage. He did not feel anything but the size of the revolver and the feel that was the feel of death behind him.

"You drive okay," the man called Numbers said. "You ain't got much of a percentage to work on but you're doing okay. That is," he said, "unless somebody crosses you up. Figures will always come out even — that's the nice thing about figures — except when people mess them up. People are always messing them up on the Outside," he added broodingly; "you got to help me keep track, otherwise they won't come out even. Like now —" There was something he had to say and now he said it, "For seven years they owed me a cop. I paid for one cop before I got him, but now I got two of them." He laughed a little and said, "Bargain day — two for the price of one."

The reporter was getting ready to say something but meanwhile Numbers said, "They ought to add everything up before they frame a guy for killing a cop. A guy who could figure out anything at all to live for wouldn't ever kill a cop." Numbers paused, then he said, "Once you get past that, it's not so hard."

So the reporter did not say anything. He simply drove the car. It was a good car and could stand a lot of driving. There was no trouble for quite a while.

"Turn on the radio," Numbers said. "Let's see if we can get some music." He had the tight deadly ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

citement in him that belongs to a man who has just come unscathed through combat for the first time, after all the months of waiting and preparation when you cannot quite believe how easily a man can die, nor how stubbornly.

The music on the radio was, of course, the voice of the metropolitan police dispatcher. Distance broke up the reception, so they could not hear what he was saying.

At the first town, nothing much happened except some girls in shorts outside the drug store on Main Street turned to look at the car, and a local policeman looked at it, looked away, and then as it passed, leaped out into the street and blew his whistle. No one could tell what he expected to happen after he blew it. It was just one of the things you do when something happens that is not supposed to happen, like a runaway killer going through your town when the girls are standing outside the drug store and it is the day before the firemen's picnic maybe.

The only difference between that town and the next one was that in the next the police were waiting. The reporter turned into Main Street and up ahead were a couple of cars in the middle of the road and somewhere the telltale wink of a spotlight.

Numbers rubbed his free hand over his short haircut.

"Let's tell 'em we're coming."

The reporter thought how you could not only get very bitter but very bored in seven years in prison.

"Let's tell 'em loud," and Numbers pushed up the special's red spotlight, switched on the siren, and said, "Bet you a fin they get out of the way."

They did.

It did not seem reasonable but it was another of the things you do because the habits of routine have their own kind of handcuffs on you when the routine is broken. The traffic officers heard the siren and saw the light, and they backed their cars out of the way in a real hurry, so the special could get through; and it went through all right. The reporter got a glimpse of their faces: astounded, foolish — whatever they felt as soon as they had a chance to realize what their reflexes had done.

"Cops," Numbers said. "You always know what a cop is going to do. It's a regular formula."

"Then you know what they are going to do now," the reporter said. "They are going to chase hell out of us."

"That's okay," Numbers said. "I been alone in a cell for seven years, I don't mind a little company, even cops. Just so they don't get too close." He leaned forward and the big ugly .357 jutted up a little. "And I got confidence in you that they won't get too close, because then I'd have to screw up my bookkeeping. There ain't any place in my books for a dead reporter."

"I wouldn't want you to upset your bookkeeping," the reporter said grimly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the first crossroad they turned off the highway. Most of the cars after them now were traffic patrol cars built to catch almost anything on a straightaway. But on a winding back road the city special, with its souped-up acceleration, had a distinct advantage. The reporter tried to keep his mind on his driving because he had found it impossible to stop thinking altogether, and if he did not concentrate on the driving he would think about other things. So he thought about the road and was grateful when a squirrel started to cross ahead of them, decided not to, was undecided, and before it made up its mind it did not matter; either they hit it or they didn't, he couldn't tell. They passed a farm where a boy in overalls was driving a dozen cows up the lane because it was late afternoon now and time for milking. Just after they passed, the boy opened a gate and drove the cows onto the road because the barn was on the other side; and the man called Numbers laughed.

"There's one for our side," he said happily. "When those cops come over the hill and get mixed up with those cows, there'll be steak scattered for miles around."

The boy in overalls had waved and the reporter felt bad because he could not do anything about what was going to happen to the boy and his cows. Thinking about that was no good, so he thought about steak, which Numbers had just mentioned. The reporter was not hungry and when he forced himself to think about steak, he obstinately thought about the kind of steak he *didn't* like; that reminded him of the way his wife fixed it and that brought him squarely to thinking about home and he didn't want that, he didn't want any of that. He did not even want to begin it, because that would lead to the men who would not go home any more; and the car already was thick with the sweetish smell of gunpowder and death that meant one man would not go home to a wife whom the reporter had never seen and to a boy whose picture the reporter had been shown at various stages over the years. Mostly he had been shown pictures of the sergeant's boy during the time he played football in high school. After that they tapered off because the boy wanted to be a doctor and you don't put anyone through medical school on a sergeant's pay. The reporter did not know the other cop, but anyway he did not want to speculate about the home *he* would not be going back to either, nor his wife, nor his kid who might want to be a football player or a doctor or, worse yet, a cop. It was hard to see why anybody would want to be a cop, and why anybody would want to be a good cop was beyond comprehension. There was something preposterous about the whole thing, but just then the back road they were on came to a dead end on another broad straight highway.

The reporter let the special run and it went quickly to 85 miles an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hour, but no faster because it was a car for city traffic. A long powerful state-police car began to crawl up bigger and bigger in the rear-view mirror, and finally pulled up alongside. It was there only an instant because the officer in it was alone, on the wrong side to shoot, and before he could pull far enough ahead to push them off the road, Numbers pushed his gun through the window and the trooper dropped back instantly, to follow them instead, almost bumper to bumper, where Numbers could not get a clear shot at him.

They were still a mile or so ahead of the other police cars when they went around one of the sweeping banked express-highway curves and a yellow sign flickered up on the right side, warning of a side road.

"There's a turn," Numbers said.

"We're going too fast," said the reporter.

"So turn anyway," Numbers shouted. The side road was suddenly there, and a billboard that said *Three Miles to Centerville*. "I don't feel like leading no parade into Centerville."

Numbers lunged forward at the wheel and they turned in a shrieking rubber-burning gravel-spraying curve that did not quite come out at the same angle as the side road. They went through a guard rail in an explosion of splinters, across a ditch, and then through a fence and into standing corn where the ground was soft and clung to the tires so that it was like a carrier landing, slowing up too soon but not killing anyone.

The reporter put his head down on the wheel feeling very cold and stiff, and meanwhile the state-police car that had not tried to follow them on the turn made a tight precarious swing on the highway and came into the side road. They were behind the billboard and almost hidden in the corn, and the officer came running from his car, trying to get the sling of a machine gun over his head. When he got to the corn, a cock pheasant began cackling in alarm.

Numbers was out of the car and the officer was running awkwardly down the corn row toward them when Numbers suddenly squeezed off a shot with the .357. He missed and the officer stopped short, an expression on his face as though he had forgotten what he was hunting, and while he fumbled desperately for the bolt on the machine gun, Numbers fired again. This time he did not miss. At 30 feet the bullet struck the trooper in the chest as though he had been slugged with a maul, with everything in him breaking and while not exactly flying into pieces, still clearly not being fastened together any more.

The reporter got out of the car with a love for far cornfields in his face, but Numbers jabbed the big ugly revolver at him and they were running for the long powerful state-police car up on the side road. Numbers stopped only for a moment, then came on with the little black-leather ammunition case from the trooper's belt.

Just as they pulled away in the new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

car, the first of the remaining pursuers roared past on the highway, not seeing the smashed fence in time. Numbers was putting the little semicircular clips of revolver cartridges in his pocket.

"My other cop friend didn't have any spares," he said, and when the reporter didn't comment he added, "my cop friend in the back seat, I mean, the dead one. All my cop friends are dead cops."

This was sheer bravado. The reporter did not turn his head but something in his expression must have been visible to Numbers who said in an entirely different tone, "You're supposed to be keeping track, you know."

"Yeah." The reporter did not recognize his own voice, but he did not like the sound of it. "Yeah. It looks as though you're two ahead."

"That's the hell of it," said Numbers. "Everything would come out even if people wouldn't screw it up. The figures alone are nice and clean. Say," he said, "maybe we ain't got everything figured in. Maybe they owed me one for the old lady, too. That's one more."

"Old lady," the reporter said. "Who?"

"You ought to read your own newspaper," Numbers said. "Last week, back there just ahead of the want ads. Sixth from the top, my missus, in Other Deaths."

"Maybe it was the sergeant's fault." The reporter heard emotion in his own voice for the first time.

"Cut it out," said Numbers. "You're a reporter, you ain't people. The cops, when they're working at it, they ain't people either, any more than I am when I'm working at being a killer. Only difference, a killer don't have no eight-hour day so he can quit being a killer after the whistle blows and go home and take off the shoes. Once he's got the job as a killer he ain't ever people any more."

They took another side road to the left, this one narrower and more rutted and rocky, and Numbers said, "My missus got sick in the railroad station. It was raining and she waited all night. Nobody's fault, when you get right down to it. Anyway," he said, "she was married to some other guy by then."

After a while the reporter figured something out for himself.

"That was the day you were supposed to get out?"

"Yeah," said Numbers. "I guess nobody remembered to tell her a cop-killer never gets out." Then after a moment he said, "It must have been tough on the new guy she married. She was a good kid. But it wasn't as tough as it would've been if he knew why she was there."

There was a pause and finally Numbers asked again, "Do you think maybe they owed me a cop for her?"

The reporter said, "If you had a slide rule, maybe you could figure it out."

Numbers did not seem to hear; he was lost in some thought of his own.

Outside, the afternoon sunlight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was gone from the slopes, and in the hollows it was getting dark. The radio in this car was adjusted so they could hear the state police, and about the time the first red light showed up through the trail of dust behind them, the voice on the radio announced coldly to all cars that units were approaching the fugitive from both ends of the road.

Numbers pointed up ahead with the revolver barrel.

"There's a nice stone farmhouse up on that hill," he said, "and there ain't many trees in the way. Maybe we ought to see do they take in tourists."

The reporter swerved into the long climbing lane, hoping no one would be at home — please, there should not be anyone! — because from here on it was going to be rough.

"Nobody home," Numbers called out.

They got out of the car beside the old stone house as the first of the police cars pulled up at the bottom of the lane. There was no idle shooting now. The police were too far away for the short gun and they were no longer in any hurry. In a little while the first cars came in from the other end of the road.

"You got to give them credit," Numbers said. "They really get things organized, once they get to it."

Down the hill a man with a rifle sprawled in plain view and Numbers motioned to the reporter and dodged into the house. There was nothing much to do now but watch and wait.

They were throwing a cordon around the hill. It was hard to cover all of it because of the size and there were many open places. There was a cornfield on one side and a woods that marched up the hill from the back. Beyond the woods was the highway and you could hear traffic once in a while because no one had remembered to block it off yet — or no one had thought it necessary.

"It'll be real dark in a few minutes," said Numbers. "They haven't got enough lights set up yet. All I have to do is get to the woods and then down to the road and I can go for another ride."

"There may be a few cops in the way, even in the dark."

Numbers was wiping the .357.

"I can talk to them, six at a time."

"That sure makes everything come out even." The reporter realized that he was talking wildly. "Bangbangbangbangbang*BANG!* Mathematics with a .357, Q.E.D."

Numbers didn't shoot the reporter. He didn't even seem angry.

"It don't matter now." He was laying out the cartridges again, the ones he had taken from the dead trooper. "There ain't any way you can make it come out even once people mess it up."

"I don't know." The reporter was listening in amazement to himself. "You got three. You claim they owed you one beforehand and one for your wife."

"I wasn't married to her," Numbers said. "Not really. She married

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this other guy. I felt bad for a while. I felt real bad. When she died I didn't really feel bad. A cop-killer don't really feel nothing."

The reporter said, "I thought you hadn't killed a cop then."

"I have now," Numbers said. "I've killed three of them. That's the thing; they forget cop-killers were people to begin with and some of it won't brush off. They get so busy taking things away from you they forget that if they don't leave you something, you haven't got anything to give a damn about."

Numbers said, "You really got to look out for a guy who don't give a damn for anything."

After he said that, he arranged the cartridges carefully and counted them. Down the hill in the dusk, a police captain with a bull horn blared, talking to the machine gunners. A searchlight came on, turned against the front of the house.

Numbers was looking at the cartridges with a wondering, almost admiring expression.

"That ought to show something," he said presently. "That ought to show how you got to stand by the figures. Look at this, now, I just forgot about twenty-three lousy thousandths of an inch."

"What?" the reporter said. "What?"

"Twenty-three thousandths," Numbers said, his voice liking the statistics of ordnance. "That is mainly the difference by how much .38 special cartridges are too big for a .357 cylinder.

"There were six cartridges in the gun I got from the sergeant," he said. "There's one left. And all I got from the other cop are .38s."

He laughed. The reporter didn't feel like laughing. Down the hill the captain with the bull horn wanted to know if Numbers was going to surrender.

"Now I got to use this one," Numbers said. "I got to answer that cop." He went to the window and fired his last shot defiantly down the hill. Half a dozen guns responded but they didn't come close.

Numbers came away from the window, still laughing.

"If you hadn't made that crack," Numbers said, "I'd of gone and messed up the figures myself."

The reporter did not remember saying anything.

Numbers said, "These other guys didn't mess them up after all. It's just right, like I said."

"What is?" the reporter asked.

"The whole account: I paid them seven years for one cop, and they owed me one for the old lady, and then I was one ahead of them."

He laughed again and said, "So now it's all gonna come out even."

Then the man called Numbers opened the door and the blinding white of the searchlight poured in and he stepped out into it, the empty gun still in his hand, and him still laughing, and the reporter stayed on the floor holding on tightly to nothing at all — until the shooting stopped.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another criminological conversation with fascinating Miss Phipps

THE CROOKED FIGURES

by PHYLLIS BENTLEY

"IT'S A VERY SERIOUS RESPONSIBILITY to be a Detective-Inspector," said Tarrant gloomily.

"Who is the blonde this time?" inquired Miss Phipps flippantly.

"She's a brunette, and I'm going to marry her," Tarrant blurted out.

Astonishment so distorted the little novelist's features that her old-fashioned pince-nez slipped off her nose; they flew through the air on the end of their chain and came to rest with a click against the large black button on her bosom. Without her glasses Miss Phipps looked pinker, wilder, and more helpless than before; even her mop of white hair appeared to have become more disheveled.

Tarrant sighed as he looked at her; it seemed impossible that such a rabbit as Miss Marian Phipps appeared could be any help to him. That she had solved two of his most puzzling cases for him a few years before was surely a matter of chance, a pair of accidents; such an exterior as hers could not possibly hide a brain. Her eyes, however, now that he could see them without their enlarging lenses, were bright and kindly, and certainly he had found the solution of those earlier affairs in mere conversation with Miss Phipps. He had come to try it again and he *would* try it again; he cared so much about this particular affair that anything was worth trying.

"It's not a police case," he managed, holding his head down. "It's a matter of conscience."

Miss Phipps looked grave.

"Tell me all about it, my dear boy," she said. She drew the pince-nez firmly out to the end of their tether, and with an imperious gesture replaced them on her nose. "Who is the young lady? Have you known her long? Why is it suddenly so serious to be a Detective-Inspector?"

"Because she expects me to be able to solve this puzzle," Tarrant muttered, his head still down. "At least, she doesn't exactly expect it, but she hopes. And I hate to see her so troubled. She wants to know whether she ought to accept a legacy or not."

"A legacy!" said Miss Phipps, perplexed. "But what possible objection can there be to accepting a legacy?"

"It's twenty thousand pounds," said Tarrant.

"Oh!" said Miss Phipps.

"From a man she only saw for five minutes in the Strand," said Tarrant.

"Ah!" said Miss Phipps.

In spite of her efforts to conceal it, her discomfort was apparent in her voice. Tarrant looked up inquiringly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It isn't at all what you think," he said. "Mary isn't like that at all. She's incapable of telling a lie."

"Tell me about her," urged Miss Phipps kindly.

"I'll tell you about her meeting with the man first, if you don't mind," said Tarrant. "Mary is a nurse; she was trained in New York, but has come over here for a few years' English experience. She was in a hospital first, now she's in a nursing home."

"Is she American by birth?" inquired Miss Phipps.

"Yes. But her grandparents were north-country English before they emigrated," said Tarrant. "But I'll explain about all that later. Now, Mary was walking down the Strand in the rush hour one autumn evening — in point of fact," Tarrant broke off, coloring, "she had just seen me off to Brittlesea from Charing Cross. I'd been up to New Scotland Yard unexpectedly on business, and as I had a little time to spare before my train, I called at the nursing home. Mary hadn't much time before going on duty; I'm afraid she missed a meal to come out with me."

"How did you meet Miss — er — Mary?" asked Miss Phipps.

"Her name is Mary Fletcher Arneson," supplied Tarrant. "I met her when she was with a convalescent patient in Brittlesea. Luckily for me, a case took me to the hotel where they were staying."

"Was that patient the testator?" asked Miss Phipps hopefully.

"No, no! That patient was a young girl with a broken leg," said Tarrant impatiently. "She has nothing to do with this case at all."

"Go on," said Miss Phipps.

"Mary, as I said, was walking down the Strand in the rush hour. Just in front of her she noticed an old man with a middle-aged one. The fiftyish one was just the ordinary stockbroking kind, but the old man was rather striking. He was tall, rather stooping, with curly gray hair sticking out beneath his hat, and a very strong, fierce old face. Like a hawk, Mary said. He was well dressed, she said, in a handsome coat of very fine cloth with an astrakhan collar. He had dark gray gloves and a new-looking dark gray felt hat, and a rather elegant silk scarf. Altogether an imposing old chap. He leaned quite heavily on his stick, an old-fashioned affair, Mary said, black with something white, carved, for a handle."

"What was the carving?" inquired Miss Phipps.

"Mary didn't see at the time," said Tarrant, "but later she found it represented a dog."

"What kind of dog?"

"An Airedale," said Tarrant with a touch of exasperation. "But really, Miss Phipps, such a detail is of no importance."

Miss Phipps snorted. "I don't agree," she said. "But how did Miss Arneson come to notice any of these details, as you call them, at all?"

"Because she was held up by the old man and his companion," ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plained Tarrant. "You know what the traffic is like in the Strand, both on and off the pavement. The old chap was tottering along slowly. Mary tried to pass him first on one side and then on the other, but he doddered about, and the crowd streamed by, and Mary couldn't pass without pushing him aside rather rudely."

"What is she like, your Mary?" asked Miss Phipps in a warmer tone.

"She's tall and dark and strong," said Tarrant, "but slender. Her hair has no waves in it, thank goodness; it's smooth and thick and done tight against her head, always very neat. She has dark eyes, large and bright; and thick eyebrows and thick eyelashes. She's been to Columbia University; she's very intelligent. And she's very candid, and very energetic, and always dressed just right; she always looks fresh and neat and easy on the eye, whether in uniform or in mufti," finished Tarrant hurriedly.

"She's better than you deserve, young man," said Miss Phipps with enthusiasm.

"I know that," mumbled Tarrant. "She has a warm, jolly sort of voice," he added, "and just enough American in her accent to make it — er — attractive."

"Very good," said Miss Phipps cheerfully. "All that is highly satisfactory. So she followed the old man down the Strand, and did not push him. Then what happened?"

"He stepped to the edge of the pavement," said Tarrant, "and held up his stick to wave for a taxi. The middle-aged fellow hung back, looking bored. Well, you know what taxis are, and you know what the traffic is, and you know old men; the taxis buzzed past, and the old man grew cross and waved his stick more frantically, and he took a step forward in his excitement —"

"Ah!" exclaimed Miss Phipps distressfully.

"Exactly," said Tarrant. "All in a moment a bus bore down on him, and the driver put his brakes on hard, and Mary snatched the old chap by the collar, and the next moment Mary and the old man and the middle-aged one and several other pedestrians were all lying in a heap on the pavement, with fragments of the black stick, and glass from the bus's broken lamp, flying about them."

Miss Phipps drew a deep breath. "He wasn't hurt?" she said.

"Not a mark on him anywhere," replied Tarrant cheerfully. "But of course it was a shock to him, being so old. Mary and the other man picked him up and carried him off into a chemist's shop nearby and gave him brandy and sal volatile and so on, and presently a constable came in and took their statements. But it was before that the old man looked at Mary so strangely."

"Ah!" said Miss Phipps. "He looked at her strangely, you say."

"Yes. It was like this," explained the detective. "At first he was so dazed, he seemed almost unconscious; he clung to her arm as old people do,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not releasing her even when she got him seated in the chair at the chemist's. She had one arm round him supporting him; and when the brandy was brought, she offered it to him with her other hand. Well, as she brought the glass to his lips he gave a tremendous start. His whole body seemed to quiver, and he looked at her hand as if his eyes would fall out of his head. And then he moved his eyes to her cuff, and then slowly upwards till they rested on her face. It was a most extraordinary look he gave her, Mary said; she was very much struck by it, and somehow very sorry for him."

"But can't you define the look more clearly?" pressed Miss Phipps. "Was it fear, or hate, or horror, or love — or what?"

"A bit of all of them, Mary said," replied Tarrant.

"And what did he say to her?" asked Miss Phipps eagerly.

"Nothing," said Tarrant, "for the constable arrived just then. And as soon as she had given her account of the affair and explained that she thought the old man was not hurt, Mary had to hurry away. It was time for her to go on duty, and the old chap had the other man to take him home."

"Yes?" said Miss Phipps as the detective paused. "Go on."

"There isn't any more," said Tarrant confusedly. "That is the difficulty, you see."

Miss Phipps stared at him. "What do you mean?" she said.

"I mean," said Tarrant, "that the incident occurred in September. Mary heard no more of the matter — for the police did nothing, as no one was hurt and the bus driver was plainly exonerated — until October. And at the end of October, Mary received a letter from a firm of lawyers in Gray's Inn, saying that she was one of the legatees under the will of the late Sir John Kebroyd, and would she come to see them. She went, and found that Sir John Kebroyd had left her twenty thousand pounds. 'But who *is* Sir John Kebroyd?' asked Mary. Well, at that the lawyers hummed and ha'd, and said they ought to warn her that their client intended to contest the will. 'But who *is* your client?' asked Mary. 'If you would like to meet Mr. John William Kebroyd,' said the lawyers, 'we should be happy to arrange it; but we respectfully suggest that the meeting take place in the presence of your solicitor.' Well, of course Mary had no solicitor; but the way those lawyers looked down their noses at her got her back up — after all, she's an American, and American women are used to having their own way; so she consulted me, and I found her a good solicitor, and I went with her to the interview. And Mr. John William Kebroyd —"

"Was the fiftyish man who accompanied the old man in the Strand," concluded Miss Phipps.

"That's right," said Tarrant. "The old man's son."

"And on what grounds was the son

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about to contest the will?" inquired Miss Phipps sardonically. "He could hardly call it undue influence on Mary's part."

"No, though I daresay he'd like to," said Tarrant. "He's contesting on grounds of unsound mind. Old Sir John threw himself overboard in mid-Atlantic, from the S.S. *Atlantis*."

"Really! Poor old boy! That certainly was rather odd," said Miss Phipps distressfully. "Why did he do that, do you think?"

"I don't know, and seemingly nobody else knows either," said Tarrant. "The very day after that incident in the Strand, old Sir John Kebroyd made a new will, leaving twenty thousand pounds to Mary Fletcher Arneson. And the day after it was signed, he booked passage to New York on the *Atlantis*, and the day after that, he sailed on her. There was no reason why he should go to the States, and he didn't even tell his son he was going: There was certainly no reason for him to throw himself overboard — which, mark you, he was actually seen to do. But why did he do it? He was rich, and healthy for his age; his wife died many years ago, but he had his son John William, and some grandchildren, to care for. The son is contesting the will, as I say, on grounds of unsound mind, and Mary doesn't want to accept the legacy. But his throwing himself overboard," continued Tarrant, "doesn't really surprise me. A man who leaves half his estate to a girl he's never spoken to, and only seen for a couple of minutes, would do anything. It's true he may have thought she saved his life. And perhaps she did," commented Tarrant. "As Mary tells the story, she only helped John William to save it, but I expect she did most of it. But as Sir John threw his life away the very next week, that doesn't solve the mystery."

"Oh, come!" said Miss Phipps, smiling. "It's not really very mysterious, is it? A good deal of it is quite clear. Enough, at any rate, to show that your Mary is quite entitled to her legacy. *Half* the estate — that's so significant."

"Miss Phipps!" gasped Tarrant. "Upon my word! Really! No, it's intolerable! You say the story's clear to you? Perhaps you'll explain, then, first, how Sir John knew Mary's name and the name of her nursing home. They were both in the will, in full."

"My dear boy!" expostulated Miss Phipps. "That part is as clear as crystal. Didn't you say a policeman came and took down their statements? Mary gave her name and address to him. Americans usually (and very sensibly) give their names in full, and of course the old man heard her."

"Of course! How stupid of me," said Tarrant, blushing.

"They say," commented Miss Phipps, "that love is blind. Perhaps that explains it. But what *have* you done towards solving the mystery?"

"What would *you* have done?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I should have taken the first train to Yorkshire," snapped Miss Phipps.

Tarrant's mouth fell open. "Yorkshire? How did you know?" he spluttered.

"But it's so obvious," said Miss Phipps. "You said Mary's grandparents were north-country English."

"That's right. At least her grandmother was. She never knew her grandfather; he died on board ship when they emigrated," said Tarrant.

"Good heavens!" cried Miss Phipps, more impatiently than before. "You knew that, and yet you talk of a mystery!"

Tarrant gaped. "But what made you think of Yorkshire?" he said. "There are other places in northern England besides Yorkshire. Perhaps it was just a guess?"

"I never guess," replied the novelist sharply. "You told me yourself. Here is an old man with an Airedale dog carved on his stick and a very fine cloth coat and a name like Kebroyd. Airedale, my dear boy, is in Yorkshire; very fine cloth, my dear boy, is made in Yorkshire; the name Kebroyd, my dear boy —"

"But, Miss Phipps," interrupted Tarrant. "I was referring to Mary's people, who came from Yorkshire; I had no idea the Kebroyds did too. They live in London now."

"Listen," said Miss Phipps firmly. "The reason why Sir John Kebroyd left his money to Mary is very clear to me. Let us look, not at the problem as you presented it, but at all the data you have accumulated. Here we have a man and his wife, Mary's grandparents, leaving northern England — shall we say in the 1870s? — and emigrating to New York. Shall we say their name is Fletcher? A very Yorkshire name! You can check that with Mary, but from her own name it seems very probable."

"It's quite correct," said Tarrant, almost tonelessly.

"We don't know why the Fletchers left England," said Miss Phipps, "but presently we shall deduce something of the nature of the reason, and you shall find out the rest by routine inquiries. On the voyage Mr. Fletcher dies. His wife gives birth to a daughter, who presently marries in the States a Mr. Arneson (no doubt of Swedish descent), and has in her turn a daughter Mary. Mary grows up, becomes a nurse, visits England, and is seen by a Yorkshireman, John Kebroyd, who hears her name and at once makes her his legatee. John Kebroyd then promptly dies — he does not die the same death as Mary's Fletcher grandfather, it is true, but he *is* buried in the same place. The voyage to New York in the 1870s took longer than it does in the *Atlantis*, my dear boy, and Mr. Fletcher was no doubt buried at sea."

"He was," said Tarrant in a stiffled tone.

"So much is fact. Now for deduction," Miss Phipps went on decisively. "It is clear there must be some connection between John Kebroyd and Mary's grandfather. Was his name William, by any chance?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It was," said Tarrant.

"Just so — Kebroyd called his son after him, you see," explained Miss Phipps. "They are both Yorkshiremen, and as soon as Kebroyd sees Mary he leaves her half his estate, takes steps to insure that she shall receive it soon, and goes off to — shall we say, to join his old friend William Fletcher? Or his cousin, perhaps; yes, I think Kebroyd and Fletcher might easily be cousins. Are we becoming far-fetched if we deduce some quarrel between Kebroyd and Fletcher, some remorse, some wrong? Yes, that is the way I see it: Kebroyd wronged Fletcher in the 1870s, so profoundly that Fletcher left his native land. Sixty years later Kebroyd repaired the wrong."

"That's all very well, Miss Phipps," objected Tarrant, at last finding his tongue. "There's a great deal in what you say, and I even know further details which support it. But you must remember that it was *before* Kebroyd heard Mary's name that he gave her that strange glance."

"Yes, that's one of the most interesting features of the case," remarked Miss Phipps. "Now how shall I explain it to you? Do you know your Shakespeare?"

"No," said Tarrant bluntly.

"There's a bit in the prologue to *Henry V* which explains what I mean. "It runs like this:

> *. . . a crooked figure may*
> *Attest in little place a million.*

Do you remember that line?"

"No, I don't," said Tarrant. "And what's more, I don't understand it."

"It means this," said Miss Phipps. "A mere nought, provided it's put in the right place after a row of figures, can push the number up into the millions. That is to say, an object put in the right place, besides some other particular object, may magnify the significance of both enormously. Do you understand that?"

"Partly," said Tarrant.

"Look here, my dear boy," said Miss Phipps, somewhat exasperated. "Suppose you have lost a dish of chops from your pantry, and you see a dog sitting in your backyard, gnawing a juicy bone. Has that dog stolen your chops, or has he not?"

"Not enough evidence to say," said Tarrant stolidly. "But I should keep an eye on him."

"Exactly. But now, suppose when you approach the dog you see a broken piece of your own chop dish lying beside the animal. What do you do then?"

"Give the dog a good hiding," said Tarrant with emphasis. "I see what you mean," he added. "It's the underlying principle of all detection."

"Precisely," said Miss Phipps. "Now I believe," she continued, "that there were, about Mary's appearance that afternoon, some details which, when added to her name, convinced John Kebroyd that she was Fletcher's granddaughter. And perhaps, too, reminded him of that old wrong, of which he had so bitterly repented. He looked, you said, at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mary's hand, at her cuff, at her face. Her cuff . . . I rather gathered from your account that Mary was in uniform?"

"Yes," said Tarrant. "And I know what you're going to say next, and you're right; Mary's grandmother, Helen Fletcher, was a nurse both before and after her marriage."

"Mary's face might be vaguely like her grandparents', too," said Miss Phipps thoughtfully. "Arneson is a Swedish name, and Swedes are usually fair, so as Mary is dark she probably 'takes after' her mother's side of the family. But that's a little far-fetched, perhaps, and I won't press it. But John Kebroyd looked first at Mary's hand, and started. Now what was there about Mary's hand, do you think? Have you any idea?"

"Well, yes, as it happens I have," said Tarrant, looking shame-faced. "You see, Mary and I are engaged, and I had chosen an engagement ring for her —"

"That afternoon?" queried Miss Phipps sharply.

"No. I chose it myself in Brittlesea. I wanted to bring it to London that day, but the engraving wasn't finished," said Tarrant. "But the point is this: a week or so before that day, that last time I had seen her, Mary lent me a ring of hers so that I could give the jewelers the size of her finger. I brought that ring back to her that afternoon, and she slipped it on; she must have been wearing it when old Kebroyd saw her. It was an old ring of twisted gold strands, with —"

"A monogram," said Miss Phipps drily. "And it belonged to Mary's grandmother."

"No. It belonged to her grandfather's aunt," said Tarrant.

"Oh, my dear boy!" exclaimed Miss Phipps enthusiastically, her eyes gleaming. "But that's brilliant! That's really brilliant! It completes the whole story. Don't you see? Can't you imagine it? Some little Yorkshire town in the '70s, and the rich old maiden aunt lies dying, and Mary's grandmother is nursing her. And William Fletcher and John Kebroyd are cousins, and they each hope to inherit a share of their aunt's wealth, and they're each in love with Mary's grandmother. And somehow or other, by some mean little trick which we shall never know for certain, Kebroyd turns his aunt's affection away from Fletcher, and persuades her to leave all the money to him. She does so, and leaves only the ring to Fletcher. But the nurse, Mary's grandmother, knows the trick and despises Kebroyd, and marries Fletcher. Fletcher's so disgusted about the money — or perhaps it's a business, you know; yes, that's even better. There is now no place in the family business for Fletcher, so he emigrates to the States; while Kebroyd makes his aunt's legacy the foundation for a large fortune. And presently Kebroyd is sorry, and tries to trace Fletcher, and hears that he died on shipboard and was buried at sea, leaving a wife and daughter. But he can't trace the wife and daughter. And then one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

day, years later, suddenly he sees his aunt's old ring on a girl's finger, and the cuff above the hand is a nurse's cuff, and the face is almost the face of the grandmother — and add to that, the girl is American and part of her name is Fletcher. All those things are crooked figures in the right place, and they make a million; they make Mary his cousin's granddaughter. The stick, too, perhaps, with the carved dog — that may have been his aunt's; and now it is all broken. Symbolism, you know. As he sits there, dazed, in the chemist's chair, the whole drama of his life is set before him; and he knows what he must do. Yes, it's all as plain as a pikestaff, my dear boy; and your Mary can accept her legacy with a clear conscience. In fact, it's her duty to do so. You must confirm my hypothesis by inquiry at Kebroyd's birthplace, and then if John William cuts up rough, you can just throw his great-aunt in his teeth. Now, what would you like for a wedding present?"

Miss Phipps beamed at him.

"It seems to me," said Tarrant soberly, "that you've just given my wife twenty thousand pounds."

Miss Phipps giggled excitedly. "In that case, my dear boy," she said, "do you think your Mary would do me a favor?"

"If she wouldn't, she isn't my Mary," said Tarrant smiling.

"Then would you ask her to allow me — I would take very great care not to make it libelous — would you ask her to allow me," begged Miss Phipps, "to use the Kebroyd-Fletcher history in a story?"

Tarrant nodded emphatically.

FOR MYSTERY FANS — these swiftly-paced mystery-thrillers are now on sale at your newsstand:

A MERCURY MYSTERY — "Blood Runs Cold" (formerly "The Hunter is the Hunted"), by A. B. Cunningham. Abridged edition. ". . . lots of suspense . . . packs extra thrills . . ." says the *Saturday Review*.

A BESTSELLER MYSTERY — "The Corpse Who Had Too Many Friends," by Hampton Stone. $1,000 Title Contest book. ". . . rates with the best . . . unbeatable . . ." comments the Los Angeles *News*.

A JONATHAN PRESS MYSTERY — "A Body for the Bride" (formerly "The Original Carcase"), by George Bagby. Abridged edition. ". . . surefire touch . . ." reports the New York *Herald Tribune*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

Brèni James's "Socrates Solves a Murder" is one of the thirteen "first stories" which won special awards in EQMM's Ninth Annual Contest — last year's competition. In her first story, Brèni James tackled what is probably the most difficult type of detective story — the tale in which a famous historical figure plays the role of sleuth and mystery-solver, against an authentic historical background. It is really a monumental 'tec task — so herculean a labor that your Editors have never had the temerity to attempt it. And yet a remarkable number of historical detectives have come EQMM's way. In the pages of EQMM were born the first exploits, as manhunters and investigators of crime, of Dr. Sam: Johnson, Charlemagne, Merlin, Machiavelli, Benjamin Franklin, Sam Houston, and even of Abraham Lincoln, in his own account of a murder mystery in which he acted as the defense attorney. We have also had submitted to EQMM other apocryphal "adventures and memoirs" — about Leonardo da Vinci, Napoleon, François Villon, and Walt Whitman.

There is no doubt that the theme of a famous man (note that it seems always to be a famous man, never a famous woman) acting as a detective is fascinating, if not irresistible. The conception is easy enough — there are a multitude of historical figures who seem ideal for the role of master-minds; it is the execution of the particular idea that is the tremendous hurdle. For the historical figure has to be convincing as well as authentic, and the scene, time, speech, and manners have to be projected with equal authenticity. Brèni James has done a fine job in every way — characters, background, language, tone, and thought. And surely her choice of an historical detective — Socrates — is perfect: who in all history is more likely to have been so passionate a seeker of the truth and so logical an analyzer of the facts?

SOCRATES SOLVES A MURDER

by BRÈNI JAMES

Aristodemus was awakened towards daybreak by a crowing of cocks, and when he awoke, the others were either asleep, or had gone away; there remained only Socrates, Aristophanes, and Agathon . . . And first of all Aristophanes dropped off, then, when the day was already dawning, Agathon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Socrates, having laid them to sleep, rose to depart; Aristodemus, as his manner was, following him . . . to the Lyceum. — PLATO: Symposium (*Jowett trans.*)

Socrates strolled along barefoot, having left his sandals behind at Agathon's. Aristodemus, barefoot as always, ran on short legs to catch up with his friend.

Aristodemus: Here, Socrates; you left your sandals.

Socrates: You seem to be more interested in what I have forgotten, Aristodemus, than in what you ought to have learned.

Aristodemus: Well, it is true my attention wandered a bit, and I missed some of your discourse, but I agreed with your conclusions.

Socrates: My dear friend, your confidence is like that of a man who drinks from a goblet of vinegar because his host has recited a paean in praise of wine.

The philosopher, after this nettling remark, obliged his companion by stopping to put on the sandals; and they resumed their walk through the town, passing out of the two eastern gates. The sun was rising above Mount Pentelicus, and Hymettus glowed before them in shadows as purple as the thyme which bloomed on its slopes.

They were soon climbing the gentle rise which led them to the shrine of Apollo Lyceus. It was a small, graceful temple whose columns and caryatids had been hewn from sugar-bright marble.

At the hilltop shrine they saw the fading wisps of smoke rising from its eastern altar. The priestess, her sacrifices completed, was mounting the stairs to enter the golden doors of her sanctuary. She was clothed in the flowing white robes of her office; her hair fell in a tumble of shimmering black coils about her shoulders; and a garland of laurel leaves dipped on her forehead. Her gray eyes were serene, and on her lips played a smile that was not gentle.

Socrates: What omens, Alecto?

Alecto: For some, good. For some, evil. The smoke drifted first to the west; but now, as you see, it hastens to the god.

Indeed, as she spoke, a gentle gust of wind rose from the slope before them and sent the smoke into the shrine.

Alecto withdrew, and the two men proceeded down the short path which led to the Lyceum itself and to their destination, the swimming pool.

It appeared at first that their only companion this morning would be the statue which stood beside the pool, a beautiful Eros that stood on tiptoe as if it were about to ascend on quivering wings over the water that shivered beneath it.

The statue was not large — scarcely five feet high even on its pedestal; but the delicacy of its limbs and the airy seeming-softness of its wings gave an illusion of soaring height. The right arm of the god was extended; in the waxing light it appeared to be traced with fine blue veins. The hand

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was palm upward; and the face, touched with a smile that was at once roguish and innocent, was also turned to the heavens.

When Socrates and Aristodemus came closer to the edge of the pool, they perceived for the first time a young man, kneeling before the statue in prayer. They could not distinguish his words, but he was apparently supplicating the god of love with urgency.

No sooner had they taken note of this unexpected presence than a concussion of strident voices exploded from the palaestra adjoining the pool, and a party of perhaps a dozen young men bounded into view. All laughing, they raced to the water's edge and leaped in one after another, with much splashing and gurgling.

Socrates led his companion to a marble bench a few yards from the pool, and bade him sit down.

"But," frowned Aristodemus, "I thought we came to swim. Surely you have not become afraid of cold water and morning air?"

"No," replied his friend, tugging at his paunch with laced fingers, "but I consider it prudent to discourse in a crowd, and swim in solitude."

Socrates turned from Aristodemus to watch the sleek young men at their play in the pool, and he listened with an indulgent smile on his satyr's face to their noisy banter.

Suddenly a piercing *Eee-Eee, Eee-EEE* screeched at the south end of the pool, where stood Eros and knelt the pious youth.

"A hawk!" Socrates pointed to a shadow that sat on the fragile hand of Eros. The bird, not a large one, seemed a giant thing on so delicate a mount.

Its screams had not attracted the young men in the water. Their laughter was incongruous and horrible as the marble Eros swayed on its pedestal and then crashed to the ground at the pool's edge, sending the evil bird crying into the sun.

The two friends rushed to the assistance of the youth who, with only a glance at the bird, had remained at his prayers. The body of Eros was rubble; but its wings — which had seemed so tremulous, so poised for flight — had swept down like cleavers. One wing had cleanly severed the youth's head.

Socrates knelt beside the broken bodies, marble and flesh, the one glistening in crystalline fragments, the other twitching with the false life of the newly dead. He gently tossed a dark curl from the boy's pale forehead, and he looked into the vacant blue eyes for a long time before he drew down the lids.

Aristodemus, fairly dancing with excitement and fright, shouted, "Socrates, you know him? It is Tydeus, the Pythagorean. What a fool he was to try to bargain with Eros! The god has paid him justly!"

The philosopher rose slowly, murmuring, "Eros dispenses love, not justice." His eyes strayed over the rubble, now becoming tinted with the red of sunlight and the deeper red. A

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

white cluster of fat clung to the shattered marble fingers of the god.

"The sacrifice," said Aristodemus, following his glance. "Tydeus was going to sacrifice that piece of lamb."

By this time the crowd of swimmers, glistening and shivering, had run to see what had happened. They chattered like birds, their voices pitched high by death.

"Someone must run to tell his friend Euchecrates," cried Aristodemus.

At this, the group fell silent. Socrates looked intently on each of the young men. "You are unwilling," he said mildly, "to tell a man of his friend's death?"

At last a youth spoke up: "We were all at dinner together last night, Tydeus and Euchecrates among us. Our symposiarch suggested that we discourse on the theme of Fidelity, for we all knew that Tydeus found it difficult to remain loyal to his friend Euchecrates. The symposiarch thought to twit him about it."

"But," broke in one of the others, "Tydeus immediately took up the topic and spoke as though he, not Euchecrates, were the victim of faithlessness!"

The first boy nodded. "It became a personal argument between them, then, instead of a discussion among friends. They began to rail at each other about gifts of money and gamecocks and I know not what. All manner of fine things, from what Tydeus said."

Socrates: Then these gifts were from our dead friend Tydeus to Euchecrates?

Youth: Yes, Socrates; and Tydeus was angry because Euchecrates had given them all away to someone else.

Socrates: To whom did Euchecrates give the gifts of Tydeus?

Once again silence fell, and the young men exchanged puzzled looks. But a bronzed athlete who had been standing outside the circle blurted out: "Even Tydeus didn't know who it was!"

Socrates: Why do you say that?

Athlete: I came here to the palaestra before any of the others, just at daybreak, and I met Tydeus on his way to the god. I recall that I asked him if he were going to swim, and he said, no, he was about to offer a prayer to Eros for a misdeed. Then I teased him about losing his gifts . . .

Socrates: And asked him who Euchecrates's admirer was?

Athlete: Yes, but Tydeus flew into a rage and began to say things in a distracted fashion about "that person," as he put it, "whoever it may be." I wanted to speculate with him on the identity, but Tydeus said he must hurry to Eros, for he wished to complete his prayer before the sun rose above the horizon.

Socrates: And he said nothing further? Well, then, will you now please go to Euchecrates's house and tell him what has befallen his friend Tydeus, and ask him to meet Socrates at the Shrine of Apollo Lyceus?

The bronzed youth agreed to do so, and Socrates took his companion

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aristodemus by the arm, leading him back up the path to the shrine. "I shall return with water," he said, passing through the crowd, "that you who have touched the body may purify yourselves."

When they were out of the hearing of the young men, Aristodemus said in a low voice, "I know, Socrates, that you seek answers by the most devious questions; but I cannot discover what it is you attempt to glean from all that you have asked of those boys."

Socrates: I believe you said that the piece of fat which we saw in the rubble was sacrificial lamb?

Aristodemus: I would say so. And we saw Tydeus sacrificing, did we not?

Socrates: We saw him praying. Do you recall that the bronzed fellow told us that when first he saw Tydeus, he asked Tydeus if he were going to swim?

Aristodemus: Yes, I remember.

Socrates: And would it not be an exceedingly odd question to ask of a man who was carrying a sacrifice?

Aristodemus: That is true, Socrates; but what does it mean?

Socrates: You recall, too, that you spoke of Tydeus as a Pythagorean?

Aristodemus: Yes, I know that he was.

Socrates: Then perhaps you will also remember that, among Pythagoreans, it is a custom never to offer living sacrifice, or to kill any animal that does not harm man?

Aristodemus: I had forgotten, Socrates. And I see now that it could not have been possible that Tydeus intended to sacrifice.

Socrates: Yet we saw a piece of lamb, did we not? How else could we account for it, if it were not brought to be sacrificed?

Aristodemus: It seems unaccountable.

Socrates: Do you remember where you saw it?

Aristodemus: It was on the hand of Eros.

Socrates: And so, also, was the hawk. Does that not suggest another reason for the fat?

Aristodemus: Why, yes! It must have been placed on the hand as bait for the bird!

Socrates: Clearly, that is what was intended. And I think it must have been fastened there in some manner, for the hawk did not pick it up and fly off, but rather balanced himself on the fingertips and pulled at it until the statue was overbalanced.

The two had walked, in their preoccupation, to the very steps of the altar before the Shrine of Apollo Lyceus. The eastern doors of the marble sanctuary were still open, and they could see the god within, gold and ivory, gleaming softly now in the full morning light.

But at that moment they heard shouts from a footpath on their right, and they saw the bronzed athlete running toward them. He pulled up abruptly and panted heavily.

"He's dead, Socrates! Euchecrates is dead! I found him at Tydeus's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

house, in the doorway. He'd hanged himself from a porch beam!"

Socrates: Are you certain Euchecrates took his own life?

Athlete: Quite certain, Socrates. For he had scrawled a message on the wall, and I recognized his writing.

Socrates: What was his message?

Athlete: "Hide me in a secret place." Does not that mean he was ashamed?

Socrates: That is so.

"Who wishes to be hidden?" asked a woman's voice, and the three men turned to see Alecto, the priestess of the shrine, slowly and gracefully descending the marble steps.

Socrates: Euchecrates, who has killed himself, Alecto.

Alecto: It is indeed a dreadful thing to hear, Socrates.

Aristodemus: Oh, there is more! See where the statue has fallen? Tydeus lies dead beneath it.

Alecto: He must have displeased Eros mightily to have been felled by the god's own image!

Aristodemus: No, I think it fell because Euchecrates contrived that it should.

Alecto: How could it have been contrived, Aristodemus?

Socrates: Alecto, we came to ask you for some water which we will take to the Lyceum, for there are those of us who have not yet purified ourselves.

The priestess nodded and left. She returned in a few moments with a vessel of water.

Socrates: I should have asked also on behalf of this young man, so that he may take some to the place where he found Euchecrates.

Athlete: No, there is not need of that; for there was water there.

Socrates: Indeed? Then, Alecto, who preceded us with such a request?

Alecto: For water? Why, no one.

Socrates: Can purificatory water be simply drawn out of a well, or a pool, or any other ordinary source?

Alecto: No, of course it must be obtained from a priest or a priestess.

Socrates: And there is no other priest or priestess so close to the house of Tydeus, where Euchecrates lies?

Alecto: No, I am the closest.

Socrates: Then can we not assume the water was obtained here? Do you not recall such a request?

Alecto: Only that of Tydeus, several hours ago. I didn't know why he asked for water, but it would now seem to be for that reason.

Socrates: And we know also from this, do we not, Aristodemus, that Euchecrates was already dead when Tydeus went to pray to Eros? Tell me, Alecto, when Tydeus came for water, do you recall that he asked for anything else?

Alecto: I recall nothing else.

Socrates: Tydeus had told this young man that he could not stand and talk with him, since he wished to complete his prayers before the sun's rise. Does that not indicate that Tydeus knew beforehand that his prayers would be of some length?

Alecto: Yes, surely it does.

Socrates: And since he stayed to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

complete them even though the sun had already risen, and was not even distracted from his intentions by the presence and noise of the bird, what is the likely conclusion?

Aristodemus: I would say that he had a particular prayer to complete.

Socrates: Excellent. That would be my conclusion. Now, Alecto, do you think it likely that a young man still angry from a quarrel — indeed distraught — would sit down and compose a lengthy prayer?

Alecto: He would be more likely to pray spontaneously.

Socrates: But these things seem not to agree. The prayer, we may suppose, was planned beforehand; yet the young man was not prepared to plan the prayer. What may we surmise, then?

Alecto: That someone else composed the prayer for him?

Socrates: I believe so. And who would be likely to have done that?

Alecto: It would be someone expert in such matters, no doubt.

Socrates: Such as a priest or priestess?

Alecto: Yes, it must be so.

Socrates: And since Tydeus called, as you have said, upon yourself, Alecto, does it not seem inevitable that he asked you to compose his prayer?

Alecto: I am compelled to admit he did just that, Socrates.

Socrates: And one last matter: You were sacrificing lamb here at dawn?

Alecto: Yes, lamb and honey.

Socrates: And where is the fat of the lamb which you sacrificed this morning, Alecto? While Tydeus was within memorizing his prayer, did you not go down to the statue of Eros and affix some of the fat to that extended hand?

Alecto: You have a daemon advising you, Socrates!

Aristodemus: Oh, no, Alecto. It is as Cebes has said: Socrates can put a question to a person in such a way that only the true answer comes out! But, Alecto, how did Tydeus dare come to you?

Alecto: He did not know that it was to me his friend Euchecrates had given his gifts. But when Tydeus confessed to me that he had caused my lover's suicide, I could not but avenge the death!

The priestess turned her cold eyes proudly on Socrates. "I was named Alecto for good reason," she said with fierce triumph; "for like that divine Alecto, the Well-Wisher, I too found myself singled out by the gods to wreak vengeance!"

"But remember," cautioned Socrates quietly, "we call the divine Alecto the 'well-wisher' only to placate her. She is still one of the Furies. She still pursues the blood-guilty to death or madness. And think, Alecto: You are only mortal, and you have done murder."

Alecto's eyes widened with the sudden, horrible knowledge of her own fate.

The priestess wept then, and drew the heavy black coils of hair about her face like a shroud.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Most readers will remember Hartzell Spence as the author of that delightful bestseller, ONE FOOT IN HEAVEN. *Nearly all of Mr. Spence's work is characterized by religious feeling — which is not surprising, since Mr. Spence is the son of a minister. But the man who was the officer-in-charge of "Yank" during the war, the major who got fired for writing an editorial his boss-general didn't like, is capable of writing a story with no religious flavor in it at all. Such a story is "The Big Tipper" — an extremely amusing and ingenious tale of high-stake gambling in Monte Carlo, which to some people is a kind of heaven, and to others a kind of hell. . . . "The Big Tipper" is an unusual story to appear in EQMM. There is no detection, and in a strict sense, there is not even any crime. But there is a fascinating mystery — about Monsieur Chapuyt and his incredible run of luck at the Casino and his fabulous tipping of the croupier — princely sums night after night!*

THE BIG TIPPER

by HARTZELL SPENCE

I FIRST HEARD ABOUT M. CHAPUYT IN Paris, from a friend who had recently returned from the Riviera. "This Chapuyt," I was informed, "has the most incredible luck. Night after night he wins at the Casino, and how they absorb their losses must be a story as interesting as his gambling genius."

Under this double-edged impulsion, I very soon found myself writing to the only man I knew in the south of France, one Emil Gautier who, over a bridge game during the Atlantic crossing, had offered to accompany me to the famous Casino when I traveled his way. Now I imposed upon this brief acquaintance to inform him that I would accept his invitation.

A Frenchman who has decided to be courteous does the thing extremely well. When I reached my Riviera hotel, a note from Gautier greeted me effusively and stated that he would call that night at 9 — which he did — and in another five minutes we were walking through the formal gardens which illuminated the pink marble palace of chance. Gautier knew that I was a writer, but when I told him that I was intrigued by one Monsieur Chapuyt, Gautier did not acknowledge the name as within his acquaintance. He seemed genuinely glad to see me, and by the time we reached the Casino, we entered as good friends.

Copyright, 1952, by Hartzell Spence; originally published in Blue Book

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I knew nothing about Gautier. He was a fashion plate, one of those Continentals who always looks as though his barber has just turned him out after a shave, haircut, facial massage, manicure, and shoeshine. His easy urbanity suggested traditional good breeding except that his black eyes were unemotional and never relaxed. Evidently he was well known at the Casino, for the *concessionaire* in the cloakroom bowed and mentioned his name. We toured the two *salles de joie* on the main floor purely as sightseers. When Gautier asked if I wished to try my luck, I parried him at once. "Solitaire is my game," I said lightly.

Monsieur Gautier raised one perfectly trimmed eyebrow, as though I had prompted him, and said, "Well, I don't know whether there is play in solitaire tonight. It's upstairs, you know. Let's go up. But don't expect too much. Chapuyt is definitely the exception."

So he did know Chapuyt after all. I ignored the reference, however, as we entered an octagonal paneled room sumptuous enough to have been the sitting-room of Madame de Maintenon.

Two roulette tables, each placed under a crystal chandelier, were populated by modish women, who sipped coffee during their play and occasionally laughed over their shoulders at their escorts — who unanimously found nothing to be amused at. This was high-stake gaming and the chips on the tables were all of the 25,000- and 250,000-franc denominations — or roughly equivalent to $100 and $1,000.

Presently a man who had been outside the circle, casually appraising the tables in the company of a turbaned Moslem, bowed awkwardly to his companion and took a seat at the table adorned by the handsomest women in the room.

"Now you will see something," said my escort. "That is your Monsieur Chapuyt."

I am afraid that I stared at the celebrity rudely; but he, fortunately intent on his play, did not observe my scrutiny. He was a little man, not over five feet three, and was inching along in years. Only a few fine lines of gray hair bisected his shiny pate; deep seams above his weathered nose brought his eyes down into a squint; loose skin hung about his jowls and throat. But his eyes, pinprick sharp, missed nothing, either on the wheel, on the table, or revealed by the *décolletage* about him. His hands were those of a common laborer, but they were relaxed as though this man might lose all night without anguish. He held a great roll of the most expensive chips lightly. Five of these he now placed upon the felt in one neat stack, and in a moment acknowledged with a slight nod the bonanza which came back to him. Two of the ladies gasped, and the woman on his right paid him some deferential compliment which I could not hear, for all my straining. Monsieur Chapuyt's teeth — very bad ones, incidentally, uneven and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unkempt — showed for a moment in a *bon vivant* smile. He was vastly enjoying himself.

"Now watch closely," said Gautier.

Chapuyt took one fourth of his winnings — a princely sum — and dropped the chips into the croupier's tip box through a slot provided for the purpose. The croupier bent low in gratitude. At the same time a majordomo who had been standing near the table exchanged a quick glance with Gautier, accompanied by a subtle distention of the fingers, as though he had expected Chapuyt's generosity but emphatically disapproved it.

We watched the play for fifteen minutes. Chapuyt was a heavy investor, and though he sometimes lost substantially, he appeared to my inept eye to win often enough to be accumulating a profit, except that each time he won, he tipped magnanimously.

"Is he crazy?" I whispered finally to Gautier.

"He is the sanest man in the room," my host responded. "But I cannot speak of him here. How about some supper? The *bouillabaisse* is one of the rare experiences of life, and I recommend it, even at this hour."

We walked across the park to the restaurant, and settled in an inconspicuous corner.

"We must not be overheard," Gautier said. "The subject of Monsieur Chapuyt is not mentioned. And I must have your word that if I tell you the story, you will not use it without making both him and the Casino unidentifiable."

I gave my promise.

"Chapuyt first came to the Casino about a year ago," Gautier said. "As you can see, he does not look like much. The management assayed him as another seedy tourist, and sold him a visitor's card to the public rooms. Their analysis stood up on his first night. He risked a few thousand francs — taxi-money, you might say — at the roulette table just inside the door, where a thousand-franc loss is tragedy to the inveterate players who long since have gone bankrupt but who return night after night with their pencil and card to note each turn of the wheel and, when their system indicates an auspicious moment, to stake — and lose — a pittance. The singular thing about Chapuyt, however, was that he had a way with the wheel. He took no seat, but three times leaned over the table to place a few chips on a low-odds situation which gave him more than one chance to win. Each time, he was successful.

"He spent not a penny on refreshment, buying not even an apéritif or a demitasse. But he watched — how he watched everything! — and when he departed, before 11 o'clock, he had perhaps fifty thousand francs or, as you would calculate it, $200.

"The next night he was back, and this time the beldames at the first table noted his arrival. Anyone who wins sensationally at roulette, even for a single evening, becomes a celeb-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rity overnight. These habitués — did you see their faces? Hopeful, then desperate, then bitter, yet convinced that soon fortune must turn, or the perfect system be found. The condition is pathological. It gets into the blood like a virus, inducing fever for play, until finally it becomes a mania. You can see what a winning player would do to such people. They watched Chapuyt avidly. When he leaned over their shoulders to make a wager, they pounced down their little bets at the same place. . . . I see you like the *bouillabaisse*."

"It is perfect," I said.

"Well. . . . Chapuyt did not seem to mind this parroting of his bet. But he did not like the greedy triumph with which they gathered in their winnings. He was so upset, in fact, that he left his stake, including his profit, on the table, and walked away. The other players realized that they had offended him. So they did not follow his position again, and were stunned when he won.

"The croupier did not know what to do. Lacking instructions, he let Chapuyt's bet ride, since a winner almost never comes up three times identically. But Chapuyt won. And as the croupier pushed a quarter-million francs into a neat pile with his stick, Chapuyt reappeared at the table, collected his chips without glancing at the crones, and fled.

"A profit of a thousand dollars creates no excitement at the Casino, except in the first room. So the management paid no attention to Chapuyt when he entered the inner salon where the players were risking that much on each spin of the wheel. He played one 25,000-franc chip, and lost. He risked another, and lost again. Then he began to hit, winning five times successively, parlaying all his profit until he had the equivalent of $100,000. Here he drew in his chips and went back to his original 25,000-franc bet.

"By now he was a celebrity in the inner room, too. His next wager was duplicated by everyone at the table. As in the other salon, he was revolted. Immediately he cashed his chips and departed. The story wearies you, perhaps?"

"No, no," I said, "I'm fascinated. But you tip the ending. Monsieur Chapuyt was the devil in disguise. As a story-writer, I can tell you it is very old stuff."

Gautier was delighted.

"Excellent!" he exclaimed. "Such a possibility occurred to the management, of course. Such things do not happen — but gamblers like to be sure. Chapuyt did not leave the Casino alone that night. A man he did not see followed him to his hotel and ascertained that his identity papers were in perfect order. Like most careful travelers, Chapuyt had a minimum accommodation at the best hotel, his meals included in the price. He made no special demands, had no visitors, and no interest except the Casino. His only fault was that he never bestowed a tip. You are surprised at this, I see."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It seems out of character," I replied, "after what I have seen."

"It is common among working men; and that, the management discovered by inquiry in Paris, was Chapuyt's origin. For forty years he had lived inconspicuously in St. Cloud within walking distance of work in a pottery factory, where he ultimately became a foreman. He had never married. During the Occupation he had been forced into labor at the Renault auto works, also near his home, and there he had performed small jobs of espionage for the British, who hired him as a chauffeur for a time after the Liberation. When this work ended, he toured Italy. Now he appeared to be on his way home. Does he still sound like the Old Nick?"

"He disappoints me," I said. "But you do not. How the devil do you know all this?"

Gautier was embarrassed. "It is not generally known," he said, "but I am a director of the Casino. It is my business to know these things. Sometimes a knowledge of our patrons comes in handy, as you will see. In this case, our conclusion was that Chapuyt, knowing nothing about roulette, was having a phenomenal run of beginner's luck. It happens. He plays roulette best who plays it worst. Chapuyt had something better than a system: instinct, courage, and ignorance.

"He returned the following night, and this time there was determination in his stride, as though he had decided not to let the avidity of the others deter him from making a fortune. In his changed attitude I saw the beginning of the end. I fully expected his winnings to be safely in our pockets by 11 o'clock, and his nest-egg along with them."

"But he continued to win," I intervened.

"Nothing of the sort," Gautier said. "He didn't play. To be sure, he approached the tables as before. The chips rested confidently in his quiet hand. But every time he took a playing position, the table filled at once and everyone poised to duplicate his choice. This deterred him. His manner indicated that to him gambling was sport, but to these others it was something evil, to which he could not be a party. Do you understand me?"

"Most gamblers don't worry about the other fellow," I said.

"Ah, that's precisely the point," said Gautier. "Was Chapuyt a gambler?"

"Proceed," I encouraged him.

"About 10 o'clock, when Chapuyt had not risked a franc, one of the floor managers suggested to him that he visit the high-stake salon on the floor above, where he might try his luck in peace. The exclusive clientele there, he was told, were of a sort who would consider the duplication of another's bet very *gauche* behavior. He went upstairs immediately.

"He drifted about aimlessly, and so doing discovered the solitaire tables. They are not used much — only at the height of the season when the very rich are with us. Chapuyt was in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trigued by this form of gaming which could not be copied. We observe the usual Klondike rules. You know the game?"

"I think so," I said. "We call it Canfield, but actually it is a seven-file layout, each file with an exposed card on top. The right-hand file has six face-down cards, the adjacent file has five, and so on down until the last file consists of a single card, face up."

"Precisely," Gautier concurred. "In a casino, the hand stock is played one card at a time off the top, so the player goes through the deck only once. This form of solitaire is an extremely interesting game. If you buy the deck for $100 a card, and run the cards clear out, you pocket $26,000. The payoff is at the rate of five times the per-card investment for each card put up into the foundation. So you begin to win on the eleventh card. But I do not need to remind you that the odds are much greater than five to one.

"Well, to get back to Chapuyt. He seemed to know the game, and finally slid into a vacated seat. The departing player was one of your Americans who wagers $1,000 a card. Evidently Chapuyt thought this the minimum for the table, for he bought the deck at her price.

"He did not win much in the first game — ten thousand, I think it was. But he played carefully. For example, when there was a choice of shifting one of two files, he always moved from the rank which covered the most down-cards, thus reducing his odds, even though the other move might have been more to his temporary advantage. He never played a card to the foundation if it might be needed later to build a file. In other words, he was out to run the pack rather than just to make a small profit. Few people, playing solitaire for money, have courage enough to pursue the ultimate game, and as a result, few of them win. I see from your expression that you are anticipating again."

"He won, of course."

"Not spectacularly. But ten thousand here, fifteen thousand there, over several evenings, until he had — with his roulette luck thrown in — a quarter-million dollars of our money."

"That shouldn't bother you."

"Not at all. It is good publicity and eventually most of it comes back to us. But in francs at current exchange it becomes astronomical: 62,500,000, to be exact. We were worried. And since Chapuyt was now playing from profits, he became bolder. For example, he sat down one evening and calmly ran off ten losing games in succession, then in three profitable sequences got it all back. We could only hope that his incredible luck would fail and that he would be cleaned out before the laws of chance gave him what every solitaire player must ultimately realize: a clean sweep of the deck."

"When I play solitaire," I observed, "I may win three or four times within a few minutes."

"Solitaire is that kind of game," Gautier agreed. "But when you are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

playing at home, risking nothing, you can afford to lose for a month before that happens. Few people could bank such losses in a casino. However, if you do not have consistent heavy losses, you realize a very large profit when you begin to hit. And that is what Chapuyt did to us. Playing his long game, he nicked us consistently for small sums. He was a splendid player. He never made a mistake. Most people overlook possible plays, or make foolish moves for immediate advantage which increase the odds against them. Not Chapuyt!

"Then came the inevitable evening when he ran out the deck on us his very first game of the evening. He made ten thousand on his second game, lost fifteen thousand on his third, and then, *mirabile!* two more smashes in a row. Three-quarters of a million dollars' profit in ten minutes! And with that, Monsieur Chapuyt rose from the table and approached the cashier to collect 187,500,000 francs."

"Smart fellow," I said.

"Exactly," Gautier agreed unhappily. "There was no doubt that he was finished, though for some reason quite detached from the play, he seemed most reluctant to quit the salon. In my mind I could see him aboard the morning plane for Paris. It was most unappetizing."

"So?"

"Naturally, we do not carry two hundred million francs in the cashier's cage against a single night's play. To pay such a sum in these times is difficult, though not impossible. My colleagues and I decided to play a bit of strategy on Monsieur Chapuyt, and keep him in town a while. He had, we thought, run his luck. Now to get the money back! That was our problem."

"Quite a problem," I said.

"Under ordinary circumstances, and against ordinary frequenters of casinos, no. Against Chapuyt, yes, for he was not the gambling type. Ordinarily we would have paid up with extravagant compliments, making a splendid scene of our congratulations and envy, with toasts in vintage champagne and talk of a memorial in the garden, had he been just a bit luckier. Had he seen the bronze to M. Rochambeau, we would say, the only man to win a million? The victim would return to beat Rochambeau's record, and lose everything. Such tactics always work. But Monsieur Chapuyt did not have the disease."

"Not malignantly, anyway," I concurred.

"It need only be chronic," said Gautier. "What we did with Chapuyt was to conduct him to the directors' chambers and explain that to pay such a sum required a trip to our bankers. He understood that. Would he care for a glass of wine during his wait? No, he said, he drank nothing. A bit of supper? His stomach permitted no piece-mealing. A coffee, perhaps?" Gautier paused, winced, and went on. "He joined us in a glass of Vichy water!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"As we talked to him, we realized that he was not excited over the money he had won. He was anxious, in fact, over his windfall, and afraid that if he remained among us he might become like the habitual players, who depended on the night's play as a narcotics addict relies on his daily injection. He liked the excitement, but since he could not play roulette, and since solitaire had begun to bore him, he was going home, before he began to lose and contract the gamblers' disease.

"It was then that my colleague M. Reynard was suddenly inspired with the true assessment of Chapuyt's character. He had returned night after night not to play solitaire but to mingle with the celebrities who patronized the exclusive upstairs room.

"So Reynard cautiously suggested that there was a way whereby Chapuyt might play on and yet avoid the disease. In fact, he might spend the rest of his life about the Casino. All he had to do was to leave the three-quarter million he had won with the Casino as an investment against a lifetime of play. Reynard emphasized what Chapuyt must by now realize, namely, that frequenters of the *salon intime* would never duplicate another's wager. In return for his investment, the Casino each night would give Chapuyt an unlimited supply of chips. When he finished playing, he would turn in his unspent chips. Obviously, if he won, he surrendered his gains. But when his luck turned, as inevitably it must, he could not lose, either. Unobsessed by either the profit motive or the fear of loss, he would never contract the virus."

"He took it?" I asked, incredulous.

"He accepted promptly," Gautier said, "with one stipulation which proved how precise Reynard's evaluation of him had been. He insisted that no one — not even the croupiers — know of the deal that had been made. He had already won sufficient on previous nights to maintain himself comfortably in a hotel for life. And it was, on the whole, a good investment for us."

"Quite a deal," I said.

"Ah, but the odd thing is that Chapuyt's luck has not changed. He wins at roulette night after night. He is the idol of the salon, a mystery man of great distinction among, shall I say, a discriminating clientele. Had he made no bargain with us, he would today be one of the richest men on the Riviera, in the world."

"What a story!" I exclaimed.

"But I am not quite to the end of it," Gautier said. "You mentioned his extravagant tips to the croupiers."

"I did, indeed. He must give away thousands."

"He gives away nothing," Gautier said bitterly. "All his life Chapuyt was a money-grubber, watching every franc. He never had a penny for tips. He was even embarrassed about it.

"Now, my friend, he can afford to tip like a champagne salesman. Don't you see? The chips cost him nothing. He is tipping with *our* money!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Different" is perhaps the best word to describe Margery Sharp's "The Man Who Feared the Water." Surely the tone of the story is "different" from the light-hearted comedy you remember in THE NUTMEG TREE *and in Miss Sharp's recent Literary Guild selection,* THE GYPSY IN THE PARLOUR. *And the locale of the story is "different" — a small island in the Mediterranean where "unhappiness was out of place." And the natives on the island — their means of earning a living is "different," not to say curious and curdling. And while the chief characters present the eternal triangle — in this instance, a poetic "genius," a dour Scottish newspaperman, and a young woman who "with a little more color . . . might have been lovely" — the triangle is decidedly "different," at least in its psychological implications.*

"Rent" a white adobe house overlooking Spanish Harbor and the jade-colored bay, hear the natives dancing on the quay to the sound of a concertina — and watch the drama unfold . . .

THE MAN WHO FEARED THE WATER

by MARGERY SHARP

IT IS NO USE TRYING TO COMMIT SUICIDE in the waters of Spanish Harbor; the islanders swim too well. Toss a sixpence from the jetty, and two or three lithe young ruffians will be tumbling after it before it touches bottom; while at any larger splash, as of a falling body, the whole sleepy quayside wakes to instant life. Once or twice in each season (if the luck is good) some careless or careworn stranger will miss his footing, and then the lucent water boils milk-like with expert rescuers. The first half-dozen or so clutch at his helpless limbs, the rest content themselves with outlying portions of his raiment, and though the stranger may be a strong and resolute swimmer, he has no opportunity of proving it. Within ten seconds he is seized, saved, and haled back to shore, there to be dunned, in several different patois, for extortionate rewards. George Cotterill, who lived on the island, once worked out some very interesting statistics; the least anyone had ever got away with, he said, was about twenty-two shillings at the normal rate of exchange.

In spite of this drawback, however, Spanish Harbor is a pleasant place, and the strangers continue to come. There is no hotel, but all round the bay stand tall old houses of white adobe, houses that turn their backs to the street and their windows to the sea; and these houses the strangers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rent. The water in the bay is a clear jade color, very different from the deep true Mediterranean to be seen from the roof-tops; but though many of the English bathe there daily, they all employ in addition a shallow tin pan. What the other inhabitants do is not so certain; quite possibly they just have a sponge-down; but then the islander, as young Foley observed, is not like your Anglo-Saxon.

It was a remark he made frequently, and there was nothing odd in that. But what was exceedingly odd was the fact that, unlike most of his compatriots, Maurice Foley spoke not in sorrow, but in admiration. He admired the islanders' indolence, their lack of public spirit; he approved beyond measure their extremely individual attitude towards the sanctity of human life, which indeed they seemed to create and to destroy with equal insouciance; he liked their indifference to the suffering of animals. All that, he said, was excellent. It gave him great pleasure, he said, as he looked out over the island in the evening cool, to reflect that not one single inhabitant thereof was thinking about municipal reform.

To reflections such as these, and to very many others, the English on Spanish Island lent first a polite, then a perfunctory ear. They had their own affairs to attend to, and most of the men were over 35. At that age, however agreeable the reminder of one's own salad days, one does not wish to re-live them. So Cotterill offered no objections, but simply returned to his painting, and the other two artists did likewise. There were always artists at Spanish Harbor, just as there were always one or two couples politely supposed to be on honeymoon. For the colony, though without either a lending library or an English tea-room, had certain compensatory advantages. It was widely tolerant. You took one of the white houses and did as you pleased in it. No one asked questions. In all the island only four persons played bridge. They were originally only three, and the fourth had to be specially imported. On Sunday mornings, when business was slack, Cotterill sometimes played draughts with the waiter at the big café, and at the other café, the little one, where business was slack all the week round, a tall Scot called MacIntyre played chess with the proprietor. For exercise one swam, and at night, on the stone quay, the islanders sometimes danced to the music of a concertina.

One other point must be mentioned. Wherever, between an island and the mainland, a steamer plies daily, the inhabitants of the island will gather on the jetty to watch her come in; but at Spanish Harbor, where the boat calls only twice a week, this is not so. Not a step — such is the strength of their indolence — not a step do the islanders stir. And thus it happened that the first time Cotterill saw the Foleys was not till the Sunday after their arrival, when he and the waiter were sitting over their draughts at one of the café

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tables. The Foleys approached, wavered, and finally sat down, so that the game had to be suspended and Cotterill was annoyed. Most people at Spanish Harbor would have had the manners to wait. . . .

They were brother and sister, the boy about twenty-two, the girl perhaps five years older. They had the same nose and forehead, the same short upper lip; but the difference in coloring was so startling that no one would have thought of calling them alike. Maurice Foley was almost an albino; his hair, of the palest ash-blond, showed perceptibly lighter than the skin of his temples. Nor was this in any way due to sunburn; on the contrary, his skin, exceptionally fair and smooth, looked as though it would flush easily but tan scarcely at all. His sister was dark. Dark hair, dark eyes, a clear brown complexion. With a little more color, thought Cotterill, she might have been lovely. And as the thought passed through his mind, she reached up and pulled towards her a spray of climbing geranium, so that the dark scarlet petals lay close against her cheek; and Cotterill's thought was justified. Then her brother spoke, she let the branch spring back, and a moment later their drinks appeared.

It does not take long, on Spanish Island, for the original inhabitants to know all, or all they want to know, about any newcomer. In the course of the next few days it was rapidly established that Miss Foley's name was Diana, that she and her brother had no other relations, and that they were traveling about Europe (as they had traveled for the last three years) in search of a climate which should at once soothe Maurice's nerves and stimulate his genius. For Maurice Foley was a poet; he had published two books of verse and a lyric tragedy. No one on Spanish Island had ever heard of them, but he himself said they were good. (The Scotsman MacIntyre, on the other hand, to whom Miss Foley lent the works, said they were bad; but then MacIntyre had been brought up on Burns, with a side-glance towards Shakespeare.) There was also, just to complete the picture, a rumor of an unhappy love affair, but whether Diana's or Maurice's nobody seemed to know.

Like all other visitors, the Foleys took a tall white house with a terrace over the bay. In addition to the terrace, it had a garden of orange trees, for it was one of the oldest on the island; and here, with the help of a very old woman called Carmena, Diana Foley set up house. She dusted the big bare rooms, and filled them with flowers; she went daily to the market (the old woman attending) and bought figs and grapes and peculiar-looking fishes. It was charming to see her; she moved down the line of stalls with such grave attention, now pausing to consult with Carmena, now hurrying on after a distant patch of color, and all the while trying to hide her pleasure, to look matronly and severe, so that the stall-holders should not cheat her. They did cheat

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her, of course, but with a charm almost equal to her own — dropping a spray of pink geranium on the short-weight olives, or gratuitously plucking an aged but still sinewy hen. Miss Foley didn't care. She had eaten *table d'hôte* for three years on end, and her fingers itched for a frying pan.

In these mild pleasures Maurice naturally took no part. His life was full already. In the morning he wrote poetry, in the afternoon took his siesta, and at night wandered out to mingle with the islanders. He had, it will be remembered, a very high regard for them; but the sentiment was not reciprocated. The islanders, so far as they admired anything, admired physical beauty, physical strength, and the ability to carry liquor. They liked Cotterill, for example, because he could drink all day and walk straight in the evening. They liked MacIntyre for his diving, and Diana Foley for her elegance. But Maurice Foley had albino hair and boneless limbs; after two glasses of wine he began to chatter like a monkey; and, worst of all, he feared the water. He bathed sometimes, but he could not swim. So the islanders watched him with veiled contemptuous glances, and when he tried to address them feigned either deafness or imbecility.

But Maurice's sensibility was purely subjective. He continued undismayed, and whenever there was dancing always went down to the bay. He fell in, of course, and was vigorously fished out; but though the profits were inordinate (his sister, in a panic, disbursing nearly five pounds), the islanders were scarcely pleased at all. They disapproved of people who fell in during the dancing; the time for rescues was in the morning, when there was nothing to be interrupted; and they were also repelled by the limp and pallid appearance presented by the rescued. Another person who was not pleased was Cotterill. Miss Foley's largesse, in its unexampled prodigality, had completely upset his statistics.

"That's the worst of women," he pointed out to MacIntyre, "they can never keep their heads. Fifteen and six would have been ample."

"It would have been a great deal too much," amended the Scot dourly.

"Next time you talk to her," Cotterill added, "you might just explain things. Tell her that people are always being rescued, and that it's not fair to put the price up. She'll understand: she doesn't look stupid." And with this advice Cotterill went his way and had a game of draughts. There was no real reason why he should not have spoken to Miss Foley himself, but such was his ingrained habit of mind — such his lifelong resolution to keep clear of women — that the notion never occurred to him.

But if Cotterill would not speak to the lady, he was soon forced to speak of her; for Ian MacIntyre, the best conversationalist on the island, seemed suddenly to have formed the inexplicable habit of constantly dragging her in. Whatever the subject under

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discussion, Miss Foley's name was sure to crop up; and what made it all the easier was the fact that she had traveled so much. If Cotterill mentioned Mozart, MacIntyre referred to Salzburg, and the month the Foleys had spent there. If Cotterill shifted to vodka or psychology, MacIntyre followed up with Warsaw or Vienna. It got monotonous. And to make matters worse, the Scotsman's temper, usually so reliable, had begun to get very ragged. When Cotterill, for instance, idly remarked that such journeying must be very agreeable, MacIntyre nearly jumped down his throat.

"Agreeable!" he almost shouted. "Agreeable, you call it! A young woman of that age doesn't want to spend her life trailing about foreign countries! She wants to settle down, in a home of her own."

"Then why doesn't she?" asked Cotterill reasonably. "They seem to have plenty of money."

"Because that unhealthy young cub won't let her. Because he's afraid that if she gets other normal interests she'll cease to bow down and worship. I could wring the little brute's neck."

Cotterill looked up in surprise, for his friend was not usually so vehement; and what he saw surprised him still further.

"You've got a touch of malaria," he diagnosed kindly. "I get it still myself. You ought to go to bed —"

The Scotsman picked up a tube of ultramarine — he had found Cotterill at his easel on the cliff above the bay — and threw it into the sea. There was a splash below as an islander jumped after, and Cotterill grinned.

"That'll cost you more than a new one," he said amiably.

"I don't care," said MacIntyre.

And now Cotterill was seriously alarmed; there was evidently more wrong than he had thought. But before he could ask any questions — or even decide not to ask them — his unfortunate friend had thrown reticence to the winds.

"The fact of the matter is," said MacIntyre, loudly and desperately, "that I've fallen in love."

Cotterill stared, swore, and stared again.

"With — with Diana Foley?"

"Yes. And I haven't a dog's chance."

For a moment Cotterill sat silent, running a painter's eye over the man at his side. Tall, thin, sunburned, broken nose and well-shaped head — a better specimen than most, Cotterill decided; and though women in general seemed to prefer dummies, they were also notoriously ready to make the best of a bad job. The conclusion was thus rather favorable than not, and though with some inward misgivings — for his sincerest advice would have been to take flight on the next boat — Cotterill repeated it aloud.

"You're too modest," he said encouragingly. "Women fall in love with almost anyone."

"That's not the point. As a matter of fact, I know she's — quite fond of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me, now. But there's also that damned young brother. He stopped her marrying once, for which I suppose I ought to be grateful; and as soon as he realizes what's happening, he'll try and stop her again."

"Then if she knows her own mind," said Cotterill, whom the subject was beginning to bore, "she'll walk out and leave him."

MacIntyre moved impatiently.

"No woman can leave a man who needs her for a man she's just in love with. And Maurice needs her all right; he lives on her like a parasite. Who else would bother to keep him alive, even?"

"But damn it all," said Cotterill, "she's not his mother!"

"Have you heard their story?" asked MacIntyre grimly. "No? Well, you'd better listen. They were left orphans when he was five and Diana ten. He was always sickly, Diana always strong. When the mother was dying she sent for Diana and told her that whatever happened she must look after Maurice. Those things make an impression. Diana promised, of course, and the mother died that same hour. The two children went to some aunt or other, a woman who had run mad on Theosophy and never remembered to order the dinner. If Maurice was to get enough to eat, Diana had to see to it. She did see to it. In a year or two she was running the house. The aunt didn't mind — she probably never noticed. Maurice was too delicate for school, so there was also a governess; and to save expense Diana didn't go to school either. When Maurice was fourteen, he nearly died of pleurisy. Diana nursed him through it and literally saved his life. That made an impression, too."

Cotterill nodded. He was beginning to understand.

"Five years later," continued MacIntyre, "the Theosophist aunt died, leaving them a good bit of money. Maurice had drifted into writing, and wanted to travel. They went abroad, and they've been traveling ever since. Whenever Diana wants to settle down for a little, he throws a fit and says the climate doesn't suit him. If she wants to settle for good, he'll probably go paralyzed."

MacIntyre ceased; and in the silence that followed Cotterill became aware of one outstanding fact: It was this, that until the affair had been settled, in either one way or the other, there would be no peace on the island. The immediate object, therefore, of all sensible persons, must be to bring matters to a head; so without further loss of time, and employing all the eloquence at his command, he began inciting his friend to rashness. Anything, he urged, was better than uncertainty; until the worst was known, no action could be taken to combat it.

"You mean," said MacIntyre, "that I should go straight down to her this afternoon?"

Cotterill nodded. It seemed an awful thing to counsel, but what could he do?

The day that MacIntyre's proposal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was made known to him, Maurice Foley had a severe fainting fit. He had it on a secluded reach of shore, where his sister found great difficulty in getting help. Almost beside herself with distress, she had to leave him senseless and run half a mile to the nearest habitation. Two islanders came back with her, and when they saw who needed their services were understood to remark that one would have been enough. The younger of the pair then flung Maurice negligently over his shoulder, while the other lay down on the spot and gratefully went to sleep again.

It was a touch of the sun. Or that, at any rate, was Maurice's version; and as there was no doctor on the island to contradict him, he had his own way. For the next three days he kept himself recumbent and in darkness, while his sister, by the shaded light of a lamp, read extract after extract from his own works. He clung to her pathetically; he was like a little boy again. Her absence gave him a temperature, so that she could rarely leave his side. When her lover called she sent notes by Carmena, not daring to come down in person. Once MacIntyre proved stubborn, and set himself to wait in the cool whitewashed hall. After about twenty minutes a door opened and there were footsteps on the landing; but a voice called suddenly, the footsteps returned, and the door was shut again.

Late on the third evening, however, Cotterill, descending a zigzag path to the shore, saw a man and a woman standing close together. Such sights, on Spanish Island, were so little unexpected that Cotterill did not even hesitate, but continued his steps until he was almost abreast of them. He then saw two things that disconcerted him: first, that the woman was crying, and second, that she was Diana Foley. She had her head on MacIntyre's shoulder, and as Cotterill turned to go back he heard her sobs suddenly rise to a little desperate wail. She was calling on Ian's name, as though he was a person already gone from her.

The next moment, almost before Cotterill was in motion again, a skirt brushed his ankles and Miss Foley ran past. For an instant he saw her plainly, her white dress glimmering, her face pale as her dress, and round her head a white ribbon. The ribbon caught his eye. It seemed, in the midst of her distress, such a freak of fancy, so womanish in its frivolity; and then — so fast did his thought run, while all the time she was still transfixed, as it were, in that instant of brushing by — he reflected again, and saw her tying the ribbon not in simple vanity, but because the time was so short. It was what a woman might do on her honeymoon, to surprise her lover with an unexpected beauty; only Diana Foley could not wait. So she had given him at once what he might not have time to discover; and like a lady painted by Lawrence — for so the ribbon revealed her — ran weeping up the path.

Cotterill turned again, for fear of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

overtaking her, and began once more to descend. Emotion always upset him, and in his instinctive desire to get away from it he forgot about MacIntyre and quickened his pace. But MacIntyre was still there, standing motionless in the shadow, and as Cotterill hurried past, the Scot reached out and held him. It was the gesture of the Ancient Mariner, primitive and compelling.

"You saw her?" said MacIntyre, thickly. "She's gone back to her brother. She's got to give him his bromide."

Cotterill said nothing. From below came the beat of waves, from above the sound of running; then the running died away, and there was only the sea.

"I believe he's a devil," said MacIntyre, suddenly. "Do you know what he said to her? He didn't ask her not to marry me, he's too damned clever. He asked her to wait until he's dead. And he'll die, he says, as quickly as possible. . . ."

And now Spanish Harbor was disturbed. It was unused to having tragedy in its midst, and found the experience unpleasant. The islanders knifed each other, of course, but they were never tragic about it; the dead had peace (as the saying went) and the bereaved had the vendetta. As for the English on the island, it was precisely to escape all unpleasantness that they ever came there; and though such information as they had — the mere broadest outline, as reported by Carmena, of a brother's objection to his sister's marriage — was not nearly so unpleasant as the whole entangled truth, it was quite unpleasant enough.

To do them justice, neither MacIntyre nor Diana made any call for public sympathy, or in any way obtruded their sorrows; the harm was done by their mere presence. One sight of Miss Foley's face, one glimpse of the Scot's tall figure as he strode restlessly along the shore, was a sufficient reminder that unhappiness existed; and on Spanish Island unhappiness was out of place. It cast a blight. It put people out. Trade, pleasure, even the climate, all lay under the shadow of the unfortunate affair. No one went to the cafés for fear of hearing people talk about it; the big one put out fewer tables, the little one, deprived of MacIntyre's support, put out none at all. Even the islanders were affected, and whenever they saw either Maurice or MacIntyre or Miss Foley, hastily crooked fingers against the Evil Eye. The earnest desire, in fact, of everyone on Spanish Island, was that the whole trio should at once be shipped back to the mainland, there to work out their destinies in a less confined arena.

This, however, could not be, for Maurice Foley was still too weak to travel, and MacIntyre (to make matters worse) seemed equally immovable. He had never before stayed longer than a month, and was now entering on his fourth week; but instead of packing his bags he bought a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

further supply of soap. He was going to wire to the *Morning Gazette* (he told Cotterill) for extension of leave; and such was the prevailing demoralization that for the first time in years Cotterill asked a direct personal question.

"I'm their news editor," replied MacIntyre. "In another year I'll probably be editor-in-chief. It's as good as a seat in the Cabinet." But he spoke gloomily, almost absently, as though of ashes in the mouth; nor could all Cotterill's arguments shake his decision. "If I go away now," MacIntyre kept repeating, "I'll never see her again. That's a dead certainty. And as far as I'm concerned, she's the only woman there is."

"But as far as the *Morning Gazette* is concerned," asked Cotterill tartly, "are you the only news editor?"

The Scotsman considered.

"Speaking from a thorough knowledge o' London, Scotland, and the Provinces," he said at last, "I should say I am. I have an exceptionally wide experience, and also what they call flair. Furthermore, I do not lose my head. Your solicitude is kind, Cotterill, but it will not be needed."

So the message went its way, and for the next seven days the situation remained unaltered. MacIntyre tramped the shore, young Maurice suffered, and Miss Foley shopped no more in the early-morning market. She kept to her terrace, which was indeed one of the pleasantest spots on the island, rising sheer from the water in front, and at the end from the stone quay, so that on nights of dancing one could sit as in a box over the shifting crowd below. Presently Maurice appeared there too, apparently a little recovered, but paler than ever after his confinement in the dark. He had been too ill to shave, and his lip and chin were covered with a thin albino down. The islanders, if he stood above the quay, turned their backs to the wall so as not to have to see him.

Maurice, however, did not notice. He was an injured, therefore a preoccupied, man. For though his sister had voluntarily and finally surrendered all ideas of marriage, the victory was not yet complete. MacIntyre still remained on the island: to drive him away was necessarily the work of Diana, and Diana, on this last vital point, was proving unexpectedly stubborn. She would not order her lover's departure, she would not even request it, and on the plea that it would be too painful to both, was even refusing to see him. So Maurice walked the terrace in displeasure, looking now over the water, now over the quay, till little by little, as he looked and pondered, a plan began to shape. He was pleased with it from the first, but as things turned out the final, the finishing touch was not of his own devising. It was pure accident, and it was added, about three days later, when Diana slipped on the stair and twisted her left ankle.

They took their coffee that night to the sound of a concertina. The islanders were dancing, and when the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

islanders danced on the quay anyone on the Foley terrace might well have danced too. But to neither Maurice nor his sister was the music inviting. Diana, indeed, could not even stand, and was lying with her feet up in a long wicker-chair. Carmena had carried it out for her, and was now down in the kitchen making a tea-leaf poultice.

"You needn't worry, though," said Diana, moving her swathed foot, "it isn't your China. I told her I thought Indian would be more propitious."

With a slow, reflective glance Maurice got up from his chair to lean against the parapet. He chose the angle between the two walls, so that looking down to the left he could see the quay, covered with dancers, and looking down to the right, the waters of the bay. The moment had come, and it tasted sweetly.

"Diana, for the last time, will you send that fellow away?"

For a moment, in her surprise and pain, she showed such distress that he was almost afraid. If she gave the wrong answer, if she yielded too soon, the plan would fall to pieces. That was not what he wanted. He wanted to carry it through to the end, to establish once and for all unquestioned dominion. So with some show of passion, he began to abuse MacIntyre.

"That damned fortune-hunting Scotchman," he raved, "that damned penny-a-line hack. . . ."

For the first time in their lives Diana looked at him with anger. Then she remembered that he was ill, and controlled herself to speak quietly.

"*No*," she said.

There was long, heart-stopping silence. Then without another word Maurice thrust his foot into a crack and pulled himself onto the wall. In other circumstances, and with better health, he might have made a good actor; for by every line of his body, from the flung-back head to the nervous foot, one knew that here was a man who was going to kill himself. Diana knew it, too, and flung herself from her chair in an effort to run towards him. But just as Maurice had worked it out, so the scene unfolded. Her foot crumpled under her, and she fell impotent and tortured in a double agony. Then she began calling, imploring him, promising anything he wished; finally her cries turned to screams as she tried to summon help. Carmena was old and in the kitchen, there was music on the quay, but her terror gave her such strength that Maurice took alarm. If she went on at that rate, he reflected, someone might quite well hear; so with a final glance towards the quay (where there were still plenty of people) he shook back his hair, squared his narrow shoulders, and dropped into the bay.

But as Maurice himself had said, the islander is not like your Anglo-Saxon. He has no foolish illusions as to the sanctity of human life. When the dancers saw who had fallen, they were all extremely glad. They had rescued him once before, but this time they let him drown.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One of the earliest detectives in history — the prototype of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin

THE DOG AND THE HORSE

by VOLTAIRE

ZADIG FOUND BY EXPERIENCE THAT the first month of marriage, as it is written in the book of Zend, is the moon of honey, and that the second is the moon of wormwood. He was some time after obliged to repudiate Azora, who became too difficult to be pleased; and he then sought for happiness in the study of nature.

"No man," said he, "can be happier than a philosopher, who reads in this great book, which God hath placed before our eyes. The truths he discovers are his own; he nourishes and exalts his soul; he lives in peace; he fears nothing from men; and his tender spouse will not come to cut off his nose."

Possessed of these ideas, he retired to a country house on the banks of the Euphrates. There he did not employ himself in calculating how many inches of water flow in a second of time under the arches of a bridge, or whether there fell a cube-line of rain in the month of the mouse more than in the month of the sheep. He never dreamed of making silk of cobwebs, or porcelain of broken bottles; but he chiefly studied the properties of plants and animals; and soon acquired a sagacity that made him discover a thousand differences where other men see nothing but uniformity.

One day, as he was walking near a little wood, he saw one of the queen's eunuchs running toward him, followed by several officers, who appeared to be in great perplexity, and who ran to and fro like men distracted, eagerly searching for something of great value they had lost.

"Young man," said the first eunuch, "hast thou seen the queen's dog?"

"It is a bitch," replied Zadig, with great modesty, "and not a dog."

"Thou art in the right," returned the first eunuch.

"It is a very small she-spaniel," added Zadig; "she has lately whelped; she limps on the left forefoot, and has very long ears."

"Thou hast seen her," said the first eunuch, quite out of breath.

"No," replied Zadig, "I have not seen her, nor did I so much as know that the queen had a bitch."

Exactly at the same time, by one of the common freaks of fortune, the finest horse in the king's stable had escaped from the jockey in the plains of Babylon. The principal huntsman, and all the other officers, ran after

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him with as much eagerness and anxiety as the first eunuch had done after the bitch. The principal huntsman addressed himself to Zadig and asked him if he had not seen the king's horse passing by.

"He is the fleetest horse in the king's stable," replied Zadig; "he is five feet high, with very small hoofs, and a tail three feet and an half in length; the studs on his bit are gold, of twenty-three carats, and his shoes are silver of eleven pennyweights."

"Where is he?" demanded the chief huntsman.

"I have not seen him," replied Zadig, "and never heard talk of him before."

The principal huntsman and the first eunuch never doubted but that Zadig had stolen the king's horse and the queen's dog. They therefore had him conducted before the assembly of the grand desterham, who condemned him to the knout, and to spend the rest of his days in Siberia. Hardly was the sentence passed, when the horse and the dog were both found. The judges were reduced to the disagreeable necessity of reversing their sentence; but they condemned Zadig to pay 400 ounces of gold for having said that he had not seen what he had seen. This fine he was obliged to pay; after which, he was permitted to plead his cause before the council of the grand desterham, when he spoke to the following effect:

"Ye stars of justice, abyss of sciences, mirrors of truth, who have the weight of lead, the hardness of iron, the splendor of the diamond, and many of the properties of gold; since I am permitted to speak before this august assembly, I swear to you by Oromazes, that I have never seen the queen's respectable bitch, nor the sacred horse of the king of kings. The truth of the matter is as follows: I was walking toward the little wood, where I afterward met the venerable eunuch and the most illustrious chief huntsman. I observed on the sand the traces of an animal, and could easily perceive them to be those of a little dog. The light and long furrows impressed on little eminences of sand between the marks of the paws plainly discovered that it was a bitch, whose dugs were hanging down, and that therefore she must have whelped a few days before. Other traces of a different kind, that always appeared to have gently brushed the surface of the sand near the marks of the forefeet, showed me that she had very long ears; and as I remarked that there was always a slighter impression made on the sand by one foot than by the other three, I found that the bitch of our august queen was a little lame, if I may be allowed the expression. With regard to the horse of the king of kings, you will be pleased to know that walking in the lanes of this wood I observed the marks of a horse's shoes, all at equal distances. This must be a horse, said I to myself, that gallops excellently. The dust on the trees in a narrow road that was but seven feet wide was a little

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brushed off, at the distance of three feet and a half from the middle of the road. This horse, said I, has a tail three feet and a half long, which, being whisked to the right and left, has swept away the dust. I observed under the trees that formed an arbor five feet in height that the leaves of the branches were newly fallen, from whence I inferred that the horse had touched them, and that he must therefore be five feet high. As to his bit, it must be gold of twenty-three carats, for he had rubbed its bosses against a stone which I knew to be a touchstone, and which I have tried. In a word, from a mark made by his shoes on flints of another kind, I concluded that he was shod with silver eleven derniers fine."

All the judges admired Zadig for his acute and profound discernment. The news of this speech was carried even to the king and queen. Nothing was talked of but Zadig in the antichambers, the chambers, and the cabinet; and though many of the magi were of opinion that he ought to be burnt as a sorcerer, the king ordered his officers to restore him the 400 ounces of gold which he had been obliged to pay. The register, the attorneys, and bailiffs, went to his house with great formality to carry him back his 400 ounces. They retained only 398 of them to defray the expenses of justice.

Zadig saw how extremely dangerous it sometimes is to appear too knowing, and therefore resolved that on the next occasion he would not tell what he had seen.

Such an opportunity soon offered. A prisoner of state made his escape and passed under the windows of Zadig's house. Zadig was examined and made no answer. But it was proved that he had looked at the prisoner from this window. For this crime he was condemned to pay 500 ounces of gold; and, according to the polite custom of Babylon, he thanked his judges for their indulgence.

"Great God!" said he to himself, "what a misfortune it is to walk in a wood through which the queen's dog or the king's horse have passed! How dangerous to look out at a window! And how difficult to be happy in this life!"

Note:

If you enjoy ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE you will like some of the other MERCURY PUBLICATIONS:

FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION
MERCURY MYSTERY BOOKS
BESTSELLER MYSTERY BOOKS
JONATHAN PRESS MYSTERY BOOKS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRIZE-WINNING STORY

It is a long thirteen years since we first started writing the editorial comments which serve as forewords (and sometimes as afterwords) to most of the stories published in EQMM; and to the best of our recollection we have never consciously repeated ourselves. But, in one sense, a rule is only as good as its exceptions, and now we are deliberately going to make an exception and repeat, word for word, the beginning of our preface to Lee Hays's "On the Banks of the Ohio," which appeared in the March 1949 issue of EQMM. Yes, it has taken us more than five years to pull a second story out of Mr. Hays — but we think you are going to agree it was worth waiting for.

"Lee Hays [our original introduction began] has spent most of his 35 years collecting, singing, and writing American folk music, and delving into the fascinating mysteries of American folklore. He has sung on a few radio shows and in some folk music concerts, including one at Town Hall, New York City. He has worked with the leading figures in the field — Burl Ives, Josh White, and others. It is a medium which, unfortunately, does not pay off too well; as a result, Lee Hays has had to explore other channels to piece together a bare living. One of those bypaths is writing, and we predict that one of these days the bypath will become Lee Hays's main road. Right now he is devoting almost full time to giving 'a local habitation and a name' to ideas which have been shaping themselves in his head since that day, long ago, when he first began to think for himself . . . This man, Lee Hays, is a big fellow — make no mistake about that. Potentially, he has the stuff of great talent. You will be hearing from him, more and more, and in the voice of truth."

Now, after five years, you are hearing from him, and while Lee Hays's second story is only a short-short in length, it virtually fulfills the predictions we made for him in 1949. This is definitely not a big build-up for a little story. "Banquet and a Half" is a story of great power, yet it is tender, subtle, understanding, evocative, and packs enormous sociological implications. It is, to quote the author himself, a tale "of human need, of human misery, of unsung little people in trouble" . . .

"Nobody knows de trouble I've seen,
Nobody knows my sorrow . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BANQUET AND A HALF

by LEE HAYS

TWO YOUNG FELLOWS NAMED JIM and Buddy sat together one day and talked about a strange thing that was happening to them.

"It's a mystery to me," said Jim, who was skinny and seventeen.

Buddy, eighteen and skinnier than Jim, said, "It don't seem real to me. I never had a thing like this happen."

The mystery was that a man had come to Jim and Buddy and said, "You boys don't look like you're getting enough to eat. Now, you name anything you want to eat and I guarantee to get it and bring it to you."

The boys did not answer right away but they looked at the man and their faces showed plain disbelief, and some fear.

"I mean it," the man said. "As much of it as you want. You boys can have a banquet and a half, and I'll take pleasure in watching you eat it."

Jim and Buddy looked at each other, wondering. They were two boys from deep in cotton country and they had never had any such favor done them, by anyone. Unexpected generosity was a mystery and it was frightening.

But the man had promised.

Food.

Jim and Buddy had big appetites. They had not yet stopped growing but never yet had they got enough food to tamp down the hungry pain in their bellies. In their part of the world people were said to live on the "*three m's*" — meat, meal, and molasses. But Jim could remember his father saying, "Seems more like two m's to me, I ain't had a piece of meat in so long."

Not since the fall, perhaps, when there was cotton-picking money to spend on salt pork and baloney and such.

One time company came to Jim's house. His mother said, "You folks stay to supper. We have a plenty."

Jim's father said, "Plenty? Why, we got a thousand things to eat, and every one of them is beans!"

When Jim was born his mother said, "We got another man." His father said, "We got another mouth to feed." They lived on a plantation and the bossman said, "We got another plowhand," and promised Jim's folks another three acres to tend, when the boy was seven or eight and old enough to work.

The boy was picking cotton when he was six. Many a day he would come in from the fields, trudging along beside his father and sisters, and find nothing on the table but biscuits and thickening gravy. Flour and grease and water make thickening gravy and it is flavored with salt and much black pepper to make it taste like food.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jim spoke often of these things to Buddy. The older boy said, "It was always just the same at my house." He could remember one fine summer when a gallon jar of prepared mustard sat on the table. Jim could recall the time his mother set out a jar of fiery hot peppers.

Thinking of food made them hungrier. The man's offer worried them. Why did he come to them now, when all their lives they had been hungry and had eaten food fit for hogs, and no one had ever offered better?

The man had promised to come back and write down everything they wanted. "I don't believe it," Buddy said.

Jim said, "I hope he does come back. I'd sure hate to make up a long list of good things to eat, and wait on it, and hope on it, and then never get any of it."

Buddy said with anger, "I don't want anything to do with it!"

"Me neither," Jim agreed, but reluctantly.

They sat thinking for a long time, and Buddy let Jim have an occasional puff of a "Bull" Durham cigarette.

Presently Buddy said, "What are you studying about?"

Eagerly Jim said, "Buddy, we ain't got a thing to do anyhow, so why don't we study up something to tell the man? If he does come back."

"All right," Buddy said promptly. "Buffalo fish. A big fat buffalo with the grease just popping out all over."

"You had buffalo before," Jim objected. "Why don't you study up something you never tasted? I mean like a roast leg of lamb or oranges or a malted milk —"

"Buffalo," Buddy said.

So the two studied and dreamed about all the food they would name to the man, if he ever came back.

Buddy knew why he wanted buffalo fish. Less than a year ago he had gone to a church social along the river bottoms and there had stuffed himself on sweet potatoes and fresh buffalo. Across the table from him was a pretty little girl. Buddy kept looking at her all afternoon, thinking how good it would be to have her all by his side. Sure enough it worked out the way he hoped, and they went walking along the river side. She let Buddy hold her hand as they walked. They came to a grove of pecan trees and Buddy picked up a pocketful and cracked pecans in his fist for the girl to eat.

"I never held a girl's hand," Jim complained, when Buddy was telling him about it, "let alone anything else."

Buddy couldn't brag about much of anything else either. He and the girl had not said much. They just walked along holding hands and in the early evening light they could hear the people singing, back at the picnic.

Oh death! Oh death! Spare me over to another year!

The way the music sounded over the river waters, it might have been angels singing over people who knew they had to die but didn't want to.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Buddy told Jim it was the prettiest singing he had ever heard.

All these remembered things made Buddy insist on naming buffalo fish and sweet potatoes, at the head of the list.

Now the reason why Jim thought of roast leg of lamb and oranges and a malted milk was simply that he had never tasted any of these things before.

"I looked in a book," he said, and by book he meant magazine, "and they had a roast leg of lamb in there that looked so pretty it made me almost taste it."

Buddy said, "I bought me an orange once."

As to the malted milk, Jim said he had once talked to a fellow who had actually had one. This fellow got it by working a couple of hours in a drug store in town and he said it was the best tasting thing he had ever had.

Buddy said, "I used to go to town and look at all the billboards on the road, selling good things to eat. And the store windows full of things nobody ever heard of. Seems to me some people don't do anything but eat."

Their list grew longer. It was such a fine list that they actually got to believing that the man would return.

When he did come back, with pencil and paper, he didn't get a chance to say one word before Buddy was rattling off in one breath things like buffalo fish and sweet potatoes, cornbread, biscuits, store bread and butter, pork chops, fried hominy. The man had to ask him to slow down.

Jim took more time in telling the man what he wanted, savoring the name of each dish as he spoke it. Roast leg of lamb, chicken à la king, baked beans, fried peach pie. Then he wanted a whole head of lettuce, some bell peppers, and a dill pickle out of a barrel.

Jim wanted a lobster, remembering the name though not certain what it was. The man said he doubted whether he could find a lobster in the whole state and suggested a can of tuna fish instead. Jim said that would be fine.

When the man went away Jim said, "What are we going to do with all that?"

"Eat it down to the plate," Buddy said, "and then sop the plate with store bread."

It was late at night when the man returned. Other men were with him, pushing a small steam table on wheels. To the boys it looked huge, loaded with pots and dishes full of food, the smells of which made them dizzy with hunger.

They could not eat.

For all those men stood watching them, and making jokes. One of the men was a reporter. The man gave him the long list of dishes. "I didn't actually get everything on the list," the man said. "No leg of lamb to be had, for one thing. I didn't even try to get some of the things. But they'll have plenty."

The table looked smaller to Buddy,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

now. The man had not brought everything, but Buddy observed that the reporter copied the original list, as it stood, without checking it against the actual dishes on the table.

The men went away, tired of their jokes, leaving the table for the boys.

After a while Jim said, "You got your buffalo fish, anyhow."

"A man can go all his life wanting something and then he gets it and don't want it," Buddy said.

"I want it all right," Jim said, "and I aim to eat it!" He reached for a piece of fish. "Eat some, Buddy," he pleaded.

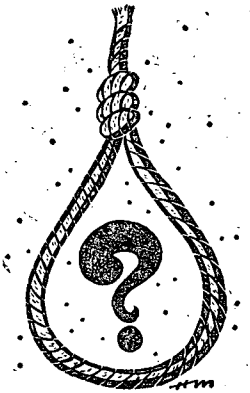
"No," Buddy said. "No sir, I wouldn't touch it!"

He shook his head.

"Please, Buddy!"

"No," Buddy said, turning away. "You go ahead if you want to. I won't touch it. I been hungry all my whole life and tomorrow morning I'm going to sit down and die hungry!"

Jim was looking at the piece of buffalo fish in his hand but when he heard the way Buddy said the word *hungry* he reached through the bars of the death cell and put the fish back on the plate.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRIZE-WINNING STORY

Although we had not intended it, this issue of EQMM has turned into a sort of 'tec tour — a cross-country crime excursion, a private-eye pilgrimage, a ratiocinative ramble round the world. In the United States you will detect in Boston, New York, and other points west and south; and in the rest of this travel issue you will visit Hawaii, an island in the Mediterranean, Greece, Monte Carlo — and now you are about to climb a dangerous peak in the Swiss Alps. Be careful!

DUELLO

by STEPHEN BARR

THE LESS HIGH MOUNTAINS OF Switzerland have a special kind of loneliness and quiet in summer, far from snow, abandoned by skiers, full of warm distant sounds or closer insect humming. The stillness of an English moor, but with a thinner silence, and a vista unblurred by haze.

The fields of late alpine daffodils lay far below us, our hotel a tiny thing we could have touched. Above was the winding path to the summit, hiding and reappearing, and a far-off chalet. My companion Couts and I walked easily, still cool at this early hour, still concerned with our mutual revelation of the night before. I was in love with his wife and she with me, and when Couts found out about this he fell in love with her himself. At least, he knew that he must kill me; and so I knew that I must kill him.

Nothing appeared above the surface to hint that our old friendship was replaced by a fierce and dogged rivalry. No change in look or intonation disclosed the submerged nine-tenths of ice. Indeed, I had had no hint of his intention until a trifling incident at the hotel the night before brought it out.

The terrace where we had dined, watching the valley darken beneath us, had a black iron railing. We finished our coffee and went over to it. Couts took off his big jacket and draped it on a table behind us; and I placed my two hands on the rail to find that it had been freshly painted. I pulled back so quickly that I bumped into the table. My hands, groping behind me, came to rest on his jacket.

In an instant his rage, so well locked in, came up volcanically. One would have thought that I had besmirched not his jacket but his wife, and of course in a sense I had. He calmed down almost at once, apologizing; but we both knew.

So we went up the path the next

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

morning as we had planned in all friendliness, ignoring the dreadful intimation of the night before, and I knew what was in his mind. At about 10 o'clock we stopped to rest and drink from a hollowed log watering-trough. Then we ate our bread and chocolate, and looked at the distant, newly risen peaks.

"Meredith."

"Yes?" I said.

"Let's go another way. Through the woods."

"Why?" I said.

"It'll be slower, of course, but I rather hate this path. We can get back to it above the ridge."

"No, I've tried that, it's no good. The pine needles are too slippery and we'd be hours late getting back."

Couts shrugged his great shoulders and we went on by the path, tediously pushing against the increasing heat. Gnats circled our heads and the dim clonk of cowbells came to us, sometimes ahead and sometimes from below.

"I don't know about you," I said after a while, "but I'm bloody thirsty. There's a waterfall."

"All right, lead the way."

We clambered through stunted saplings and orange tiger-lilies, our movements impeded by the difficult footing. Ahead was the impoverished splashing of a little water dropping a great distance. Behind me Couts's heavy breathing came suddenly close; his hand gripped on my shoulder. I whirled.

"You were right about the pine-needles," Couts said. "Even this is . . . the change of tempo . . . I'm too heavy, I expect."

Yes, I thought, but quick, quick as a Kodiak bear.

We came to the waterfall almost at the top of its uneven and headlong staircase. Under our feet the ground sloped, soapy with pine-needles and rotted toadstools. Flecks of dead leaves paused at the brink of the fall before swooping out of sight.

We squatted exactly and carefully side by side a yard apart, neither looking at the other.

"We may as well drink," I said. "Put our cupped hands in the water, you know."

His weight, his speed, his strength, I thought. I must find a way of countering them. . . . At every instant I knew that he was aware of me, of our surroundings, and of our mutual intention.

As I reached out with my two hands to the water I tightened my foothold. At the undetailed fringe of my vision I saw where he would have to stand when he came forward. But Couts merely stooped and plucked at the ground. As I turned, he held out a boulder, brown and damp on one side with earth. His face was pink, perhaps with the exertion.

"Let's throw this down, it'll make a capital rattle!" I stepped quickly to one side as he hurled it at the rock-shelf over which the water folded. The stone split in two and was lost in the froth. "I think I won't drink any water now," Couts said. "I think fat

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men drink too much water, anyway. I'll wait till we get to the last spring up the path."

I looked at myself in an imaginary mirror; not as big, not as strong and as fast as Couts. But I was less afraid. I had my plan.

The noise of gnats became louder as we left the water sounds behind us. We came out into the hard bright path.

"Twelve o'clock. We'd better shove on," Couts said.

The path at last spread itself out and was lost in short harsh grass. Here behind the rounded crest — for one must approach from the rear or be stopped by a precipitous wall of rock — the way was clear.

Toward us was coming a figure, hard to make out at first.

"Forestry man, isn't he?" said Couts.

"Yes, I think so."

"Wonder what he's lugging."

He came striding downhill toward us, a lumpy dark man in the foresters' uniform, carrying a metal case. He nodded to us as he passed.

We continued to climb. In the broad air I found I could hear every scrape of grit under our feet now, every twist of cloth as Couts struggled up behind me. . . . (No one can see us. Does he imagine he can kill me here? Is it possible he doesn't know that I can hear his every movement, that I can run downhill faster . . . faster . . . until he falls, tripped by his own strength and weight?)

We reached the top of the mountain, a small plateau, less than a dance-floor. We smiled at each other, not falsely.

"We must touch the tripod," said Couts ceremoniously, "to show we got to the top."

We walked over to the iron tripod which marks the summit of most Swiss mountains. I touched it and felt wet paint.

"That forester. He must have just painted it." I glanced foolishly at the black paint on my hands and tried to wipe it off on the grass.

"Aren't you thirsty?" I said.

"I am, rather, but I must try and get rid of some of this." He pointed to his fat. "I'll walk about."

I went over to the sharp edge, where our dance-floor dropped away into sudden overwhelming air. I put my hands in my pockets and looked at the miniscule quilt of fields crossed by the accident of roads and the strong line of the river. A dot was our village, and a piece of white confetti beyond was our hotel.

Behind me I suddenly heard nothing.

I counted my own heartbeats, knowing his terrible speed, and then I ducked. Rather I fell, collapsed on my side, and Couts blurted over me with frog eyes and his huge hands outstretched. There was no sound of his falling. I only saw for one dreadful moment, his back with the handprints I had made the night before. I looked at my paint-stained hands, the newly painted tripod, and I knew that he had won after all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The most serious and perhaps the most moving of all the Mom stories so far . . .

MOM SHEDS A TEAR

by JAMES YAFFE

"THE PITTER-PUTTER OF LITTLE feet," Mom said, managing to sigh sentimentally and point her finger at me accusingly, both at the same time. "It's one of the chief pleasures in life. I don't know what's the matter with you and Shirley, that you're not interested in this pleasure."

I smiled a little sheepishly, as I always do when Mom, in her sharp disconcerting way, brings up this subject. "Shirley and I are very anxious to have kids," I said. "As soon as I get my raise, and we can afford the down payment on a house in the suburbs —"

"Down payments! Raises!" Mom gave an angry toss of her head. "Young people nowadays, sometimes I think they got check books where their feelings should be. Believe me, Davie, if your Papa and me worried our heads over down payments when we was your age, believe me you wouldn't be sitting here eating this pot roast right now."

It was Friday night. The next day was my day off from the Homicide Squad, so of course I was having my weekly dinner up in the Bronx with Mom. My wife Shirley wasn't with me tonight, though. She was out in Chicago for a week, visiting her folks. And as usual, Mom felt that Shirley's absence entitled her to get terribly personal — downright embarrassing, in fact — about my married life.

"Besides, Mom," I said, trying to turn the conversation into a joke, "aren't you the one who's always telling me that children are more trouble than they're worth? You know your favorite saying — 'They break your furniture when they're babies, and they break your heart when they grow up.' "

"Who's denying it?" Mom snapped back at me. "And without such heartbreaks what would life be?"

"I wonder if you'd feel like that," I said, "if you were Agnes Fisher."

"Agnes Fisher? I don't know her. There's a Sadie Fishbaum on the third floor —"

"Agnes Fisher is involved in a case I started on yesterday. She's a widow, and she has a little boy five years old named Kenneth."

"And what's the matter with him, this little Kenny Fisher?"

"Nothing that we'll ever be able to prove. But all the indications are that little five-year-old Kenneth Fisher is a murderer."

Mom lowered her fork and glared at me. For a long time she glared, so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hard that I had to turn my eyes away guiltily, even though I had no idea what I was feeling guilty about. Finally she gave a long sarcastic sigh: "It's finally happened. Haven't I been predicting it for years? Associating all the time with dope fiends and homopathic maniacs and drunk drivers, it finally went to your head. It only goes to show, when you had a chance to go into the shirt business with your Uncle Simon, why didn't you listen to your mother?"

"Take it easy, Mom. I'm not the one who's crazy. It's this Fisher case. I'll tell you about it, and you can judge for yourself."

Obviously unconvinced, Mom brought her fork to her lips again, took a ladylike mouthful, and settled down to hear my story.

"Agnes Fisher is in her early thirties," I said, "very pretty and breathless and a little absent-minded — in a nice attractive way, you understand. Her husband died a year ago — he was an Air Force pilot in Korea — and she lives with her little boy Kenneth in the house that her husband left her. It's a four-story house on Washington Square, one of the few oldtime red-brick houses of that type that's left on the Square. It's been in the Fisher family since the Nineteenth Century."

"He had money, this Mr. Fisher?" Mom said.

"The Fishers are a wealthy old New York family. Not so wealthy as they used to be, I guess, but still doing pretty well. So anyway, Agnes Fisher lived on Washington Square quite peacefully, getting along nicely with her friends and neighbors, apparently reconciling herself to her widowhood. But her little boy's life wasn't quite so calm and happy. The death of his father evidently upset him badly. He's a naturally shy, dreamy kid, and with his father gone he sort of went into his shell more than ever. He spent lots of time by himself. He seemed to prefer his own day dreams to the company of other kids. And then, a few months ago, somebody new came into the lives of the boy and his mother.

"The newcomer was Nelson Fisher, little Kenneth's uncle, his father's younger brother. Nelson Fisher was about thirty years old. Like his late brother he was an Air Force pilot. He had just been discharged from the service, not because he wanted to be — flying was his whole life — but because he had contracted malaria in the Pacific. He needed care and attention, and his sister-in-law Agnes is his only responsible relative. She's a kind-hearted woman, and she was happy to take him in. She gave him the whole third floor of the old house, and so he moved in with his sister-in-law and his little nephew."

"And little Kenny was jealous maybe?" Mom said.

"At first he was jealous. He sulked in a corner, or he cried and carried on, or he looked daggers at his uncle. Nelson Fisher was still a sick man — he still had after-effects from his malaria, and what with his medicines,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his dizzy spells, his chills, his weekly visits from the doctor, Agnes did a lot of fussing over him. Kenneth seemed to resent this. One day he even went into a tantrum over it. He jumped up and down and yelled hysterically, '*He's* not my father! I don't want *him* for my father!' He finally calmed down, but the incident upset his mother terribly. And it caused a lot of talk among the servants."

"This was only at first though?" Mom said. "Afterwards little Kenny changed his opinion of his uncle?"

"His antagonism lasted about a month. Then, all of a sudden, he developed a completely different attitude. One day he couldn't stand the sight of Nelson, the next day he couldn't stand to be *out* of Nelson's sight. Suddenly he had a case of genuine, full-fledged hero-worship. He dogged his poor uncle's heels. He trotted after him wherever he went. He bombarded him with questions, and whatever answers he got he believed them implicitly. He gaped in admiration at everything his Uncle Nelson did or said."

"So this is normal enough in little children," Mom said. "They change their minds for no logical reason. And incidentally, I've also known some grown-ups —"

"Oh, it was normal all right," I said. "Anyway, it seemed to be. It's only because of what happened later — But I won't get ahead of my story. For a few months everything was fine in the Fisher home. Nelson seemed to enjoy his nephew's company. He had never married and had any kids of his own, and he treated Kenneth like a younger brother. Very ideal relationship. And then, about a week ago, at the beginning of the summer, little Kenneth started to do peculiar things. Until a week ago, he had always been a fairly honest kid. And then, a week ago, he started to steal things."

"Steal things?" said Mom, poking her head forward. "So what did he steal?"

"Always the same kind of thing, Mom. Things that belonged to his dead father. For instance, it started with Agnes noticing that her husband's medal, a Silver Star, was missing. She kept it in the jewelry case in her dresser drawer, along with his cufflinks, wedding ring, and other things, but now it was gone. She sounded out the cook and the housemaid as indirectly as she could, but they both got very indignant and insisted that they weren't thieves. For a while she suspected that the man who had come to fix the plumbing was the guilty one. And then, the next morning, the housemaid came to her, very triumphantly, holding up the medal. She had found it, she said, while she was making up Kenneth's bed just a few minutes before. The medal was under Kenneth's pillow. Agnes was puzzled. She asked Kenneth about it, but he wouldn't give her any explanation. He just turned his eyes away, mumbled something, then ran off. And Agnes isn't the strong-willed, domineering type of mother who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could keep pounding at the boy until she got the truth out of him.

"And then Kenneth did it again. In one of the hall closets Agnes keeps a lot of miscellaneous things stored away in boxes — some of her husband's old clothes, his books and papers, and so on. One day she was passing this closet when she heard a rattling inside. She opened the door and saw Kenneth. He had pulled down one of the boxes, torn it open, and was about to take away something from inside of it.

"Believe it or not, Mom, Kenneth was stealing one of those long, flowing old-fashioned opera capes that people used to wear fifty years ago. It had belonged to Kenneth's father. When he was an undergraduate at Princeton, he had appeared in a sort of Gay Nineties revue presented by the dramatic society. This old opera cape was part of his costume for that show."

"And little Kenny knew, definitely knew, that his Papa wore this opera cape once?"

"He couldn't help but know, Mom. There's a photograph of his father in the living room of the house — taken after the performance of the revue and showing him with the opera cape over his shoulders. Well, Agnes naturally made Kenneth put the opera cape back in the box. And the next day she looked into the same closet, found that the same box had been torn open again and the opera cape removed. She went right up to Kenneth's room. He wasn't there, but sure enough the opera cape was hanging up in his closet. So Agnes took it down and put it back in the box. And the next day —"

"Don't say it," Mom said.

"You're right," I said. "The opera cape was gone. It was too much for Agnes. She didn't want to spend all her time running after that opera cape. So she told herself Kenneth probably wanted it for some innocent game of his, and she shrugged off the whole thing.

"But Kenneth's stealing didn't stop there. Only two days later — about three days ago — he was at it again. The housemaid came to Agnes in great alarm, along with the cook. The night before, they had both heard strange noises coming from the top floor of the house. They both thought it was mice or the wind or something, and went to sleep. But this morning, when the housemaid went upstairs to clean, she found a terrible disorder that neither mice nor wind could have caused. There's a small storeroom on the top floor, and in this storeroom, packed away in mothballs, Agnes keeps all of her late husband's uniforms, his caps, his insignia, the rest of his civilian clothes, overcoats, shoes, and so on. The housemaid found this room looking as if a cyclone had hit it. Clothes and mothballs were scattered all over the place. And all her husband's uniforms, down to the last little insignia, were missing. The cook immediately announced that she was quitting her job. She wasn't going to stay in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same house with a wild little thief like Kenneth, and all Agnes's pleading wouldn't change her mind.

"Well, Agnes just didn't know what to make out of all this. She was really worried about the boy by now, so worried that she thought of taking him to a doctor or a child psychologist to find out what was wrong. But she isn't a very decisive person. She put off calling the doctor, and then yesterday morning it was too late. Yesterday morning the murder happened."

I could see the gleam of interest in Mom's eye. A certain perverse something in my nature made me pause, sigh, chew my food, and generally encourage the atmosphere of suspense.

Finally, to my immense satisfaction, Mom spoke up. "All right, all right, not so much *geschrei* and get to the point!"

"Yesterday morning," I went on, "right from the start Kenneth acted funny. He had breakfast as usual with his mother and his Uncle Nelson. Only Kenneth, who was ordinarily a big eater at breakfast, wouldn't touch a bit of food — not even a glass of water.

"After breakfast he went off to play. He had a favorite spot for his games, a small canvas canopy set up on the roof of the house. This was Kenneth's 'clubhouse' — but until Nelson's arrival, he didn't have any other 'club member' to go with it. So now, after breakfast, he went up to the roof with his Uncle Nelson. Only Kenneth didn't go up with his usual energy and high spirits. He climbed the stairs to the roof in a slow trudging way, glancing back over his shoulder, and with a sort of determined look on his face. His mother saw him on the way and wondered about it, but she was busy on the phone at that moment, so she put it out of her mind.

"Two hours later she heard the yell. A long agonized yell. The whole household heard it, and even though it was hard to tell exactly where it came from, everybody instinctively made for the roof. When they got there they found Kenneth standing by the ledge — a narrow stone ledge as high as his chin — looking down at the backyard four stories below. He was looking at his Uncle Nelson. Apparently Nelson had fallen from the roof, and his body was lying on the concrete below. They all rushed downstairs to help him, of course, and they found that he was still alive. Only for a few more seconds, though. During those few seconds, in his last painful breath, he kept repeating the same words. 'Kenny, why? Why, Kenny, why?' Then he died.

"Only one more thing to tell you, Mom. When the Homicide Squad arrived, we made a search of that roof. Underneath the canvas canopy, Kenneth's 'clubhouse,' we found — you guessed it, Mom — all those things Kenneth had stolen from the house. His father's uniforms, his father's opera cape, his father's insignia, even his father's Silver Star, which that kid had managed to sneak out of his mother's dresser for the second time!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My voice came to a stop on a rising note. Frankly, I was pleased with myself. Very dramatically presented, I told myself. Now let Mom make sense out of this one!

"And the little boy?" Mom said, in a low voice.

"He went into a kind of shock," I said. "He grabbed hold of his mother and sobbed wildly for the rest of the day. But he won't say what happened up there on the roof. He just stares ahead when anybody asks him. The doctor says he'll get over the shock in a week or so. But after that his memory of the incident may be gone."

"And your opinion, Davie?" Mom said. "According to you and the police, what *did* happen on the roof?"

"It's not according to us, Mom. It's according to the facts. There are lots of different possibilities — we've considered them all — but only one of them seems to fit all the facts."

"So let's hear your possibilities."

"One possibility is that Nelson committed suicide. But this doesn't make sense. He was upset over being sick and leaving the Air Force, of course. But Agnes says he was just beginning to get *over* his illness, and to reconcile himself to civilian life. If he was going to kill himself because of his illness, why did he wait so long to do it? And what makes even less sense, why did he kill himself in the presence of his five-year-old nephew? People don't usually want witnesses to their suicides."

"Absolutely, I agree. Next possibility?"

"That Nelson's death was an accident. He was running, looking the wrong way, or something, and he tripped and fell over the ledge. But this is very unlikely. The ledge of the roof reached well above Nelson's waist. It's hard to imagine any sort of purely accidental force that would tumble him over so high a ledge."

"A good point. I'm applauding."

"Well, there's the possibility — after all, we have to consider everything — that Nelson tried to push his little nephew Kenneth off the ledge, that Kenneth kicked and struggled and knocked Nelson over instead. But this doesn't fit the facts, either. When Agnes got to the roof, Kenneth was neat as a pin — no sign at all of a struggle, nor any sign of physical exertion. Which leaves us with only one other possibility."

"And this is?"

"I mentioned it already, Mom. We hate to believe it. We're fighting against believing it. But the facts leave us no alternative. That little five-year-old kid must be mentally unbalanced. It's happened before, you know. Our official psychiatrist says he's come across dozens of cases of childhood psychosis, split personality, melancholia, and so on. So that's what it must be in this case. The death of his father, his lonely life, his dependence on his mother, the sudden arrival of his uncle to disrupt his routine — all this must have upset his feeling of security. It must have preyed on the kid's mind, and finally something snapped.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The kid's crazy behavior before the murder tells us very clearly what was going on in his mind. By some peculiar twist — really not so peculiar — his uncle suddenly appeared to him as the rival of his dead father. His uncle was trying to take his father's place, and he, little Kenneth, had to prevent this for his father's sake. He had to get rid of this intruding uncle, remove the cause of his unhappiness, see to it that he and his father had his mother to themselves again.

"He didn't act the way an adult would, of course. It was just instinctive — the way a child steals or lies or kicks his nurse. But he did change his attitude toward his uncle. He pretended to feel affection for him. He pretended to worship him like a hero. Then, when he had completely gained his uncle's trust, he got ready for the big moment. Which brings us to the most interesting psychological phenomenon. Little Kenneth was now going to do his father's work, and so, with typical childish logic, he proceeded to steal his father's things. His father's uniforms, his father's opera cape, his father's medal — he took them all, slept on them or hid them away, in order to give himself his father's courage, his father's strength. By the time yesterday morning arrived, that poor kid had pushed himself into a real father fixation. In his own subconscious mind, he actually *was* his father.

"That's why he went up to the roof yesterday morning looking so determined. He had made up his mind what he was going to do. Once up there, he played with his uncle innocently for a while — the craftiness of little kids is really amazing, Mom! Finally, under some pretext, he persuaded his uncle to lean over the ledge. Remember that Nelson, even though he was a grown man, was weak and underweight and sick. Kenneth simply had to run up behind him, grab Nelson, lift, and then give him a push — the hardest push he could manage. Nelson toppled and screamed, and Kenneth went into shock.

"That's the story, Mom. And you can see another thing about it — it's the only theory that accounts for Nelson's last words. 'Why, Kenny, why?' Stunned, bewildered — even in his death throes, he just couldn't understand what had come over his little nephew."

"And this is your solution to the case?"

I nodded my head solemnly. "I'm afraid it is, Mom."

Mom was silent. She was looking thoughtful, abstracted, far away from our conversation and the dining room. This is peculiar behavior for Mom. On Friday nights, when I tell her about my latest case, she usually maintains a sharp, scornful attention. No sooner am I finished with my story than she pops out with cryptic questions, mysterious hints, sarcastic references to my thickheadedness. And finally, with great relish, she presents me with a complete, logical, inescapable solution based on her everyday experiences with scheming butch-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ers, nosey neighbors, and selfish relatives. And so, this sudden frowning silence from Mom made me wonder.

A second later Mom's unusual mood vanished. Her head snapped up, a gleam of triumph was in her eye, and her voice sounded as vigorous as ever. "He's afraid it is. He *should* be afraid. He's got something to be afraid about. The whole police force of New York City — a bunch of grown-up men with pensions coming to them any day now — and all they can think of when they got a body on their hands is to blame it on a little five-years-old boy!"

I felt a pang of hurt pride. "I've given you all the facts, Mom. Who do *you* want to blame it on?"

"I'll tell you," Mom said, "right after you answer me three simple questions."

I sighed. Mom's "simple questions" are well known to me. Generally they're so "simple" that they leave me ten times more confused than I was before. "Ask away, Mom," I said.

"Question One," she said, raising her forefinger. "This little boy, Kenny — did he go in much for games? Was he the athletical type?"

"Oh, I see why you're asking that," I said. "You want to know if he was really strong and agile enough to push his Uncle Nelson off the roof. Well, the answer doesn't prove much. The kid didn't go in much for athletics, because he didn't have many friends. In the neighborhood where he lives, it just happens that most of the kids are older. He was too small to play games with them — in fact, that may be one reason for his shyness and loneliness. On the other hand, he's a husky kid for his five years. Strong muscles, lots of stamina, excellent health. And his Uncle Nelson, as I pointed out, was sick and rundown —"

"Yes, yes, this I know." Mom interrupted impatiently. "Now, Question Two." She raised two fingers this time. "Little Kenny, what sort of books did he read?"

"Books, Mom?"

"Books, books. You remember, what you used to open up now and then when you was at college — though God knows, with the crazy profession you decided to go into, you certainly didn't need them much. This little Kenny was shy and lonely, you said. He spent a lot of time by himself. So little boys like that, usually they do a lot of reading."

"I don't see the point of the question," I said, "but you're right. The kid is a big reader. His room was full of books. Comic books mostly. Superman, Batman, space travel, that sort of thing. He's a little too young yet for anything better."

"Good, good," Mom said, nodding her head. "Question Three. This is the most important question of all." She fixed her eyes on me hard for a moment, then brought it out: "Yesterday, when Uncle Nelson got killed, it was late in the morning. I was busy in the meat market all morning — a little misunderstanding over my lamb chops, which I had a discussion about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with Perelman the butcher — so I didn't notice what the weather was like outside. Was it nice and sunny, or was it dark and cloudy?"

I just stared at her. "*That's* the most important question of all? Mom, what's the point of it?"

"Never mind the point. Only give me an answer."

"It was a bright sunny day yesterday. The hottest day so far this summer. But I don't see —"

"You don't," Mom said. "But I do." Then she nodded her head and went back to her food.

After a while I cleared my throat. "You do what, Mom?"

"I see. Exactly what I suspected. Exactly the solution that was in my head right at the beginning."

"You mean the little boy had nothing to do with it?"

"Who said so? The little boy had everything to do with it." Mom enjoyed my confusion for a few moments, then she gave a sigh and a shake of her head. "Davie, Davie, don't you see the mistake you was making all along, you and the Homicide Squad? All this talk about little boys that want their Mama's affection, and they're jealous of their uncles, and they get a Papa fixation and steal things and it's just like kicking the nurse — this is very clever, only it isn't what goes on inside the head of a little boy. It's only what you personally think *ought* to go on inside the head of a little boy."

"And you know what does go on inside a little boy's head, Mom?"

"Why shouldn't I? For a lot of years didn't I have a little boy's head right under my nose here in this apartment? A lot of *tsooris* it gave me, that head, but believe me I found out what went on inside of it. And you yourself, you and Shirley, you could find this out too. If you stopped reading psychology books for a minute and — All right, all right, no propaganda, back to the case. The main thing you should remember about a five-years-old boy is that he's only five years old. Only five years he's been alive in this world, and half that time he was learning how to talk English.

"So how much can you expect such a little baby to find out about life in five years? What's true, what isn't true? If you put your finger into a candle flame, you get a burn. But you put your finger into a sunbeam, and it only feels nice and warm. So how can a little baby find out the difference till he tries it for himself? When Papa comes home, you can throw your arms around his neck and kiss him on the cheek. But what about the nice man on the television set — how come you can't throw your arms around *him* and kiss *his* cheek? Mama tells you a fairy story before you go to sleep — you hear Papa talking about a story from the newspapers about a little boy who got kidnaped. So which one of these stories is true? Which one is only for fun, and which one should you be frightened at? Which one of them really happened? Is there anything in this world that couldn't happen?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's like my baby brother Max, your Uncle Max, when he was seven years old and we came to America. Ever since he could remember, Max heard about the gangsters in America. Only what was a gangster? How old was a gangster? Did he look like other people? Anybody bigger than Max, who shouted at him and hit him, anybody like that, for Max at age seven could be a gangster. And wasn't it his bad luck, the first neighborhood we moved into, near Delancey Street, to meet a couple little boys ten years old that wasn't exactly the sweetest, kindest little boys in the world? So he asked them one day, 'What's a gangster, Sammy? Are you a gangster, Charlie?' So Sammy and Charlie winked at each other and said, 'Absolutely, we're a couple of gangsters, we're the worst gangsters in the whole city. We've got big guns in our pockets right now, and we're going to shoot you.'

"And didn't poor little Max believe them? Naturally he believed them. For weeks and weeks he was scared to death of them. He hid his face whenever a policeman passed by. He lost his appetite. He hated to step out of the house. And one time, when they told him they were going to come into his room in the middle of the night and kill him, he laid awake shivering in his bed, and when he heard the door squeak he practically jumped out of the window. Believe me, if the window had been opened a little farther, my brother Max wouldn't be your Uncle Max today."

"Mom, this is ridiculous," I broke in. "Are you saying that little Kenneth talked his Uncle Nelson into believing that he was a gangster, that a five-year-old kid scared a grown man into jumping off the roof?"

"Certainly I'm not saying this!" Mom drew herself up with dignity. "All I'm saying is — little children are so small and ignorant, they've got such a trust in people, such a willingness to believe anything you tell them, they're like little delicate china knickknacks that you keep on the hall table. They're so weak, and the rest of the world is so big and strong and clumsy, and cruel sometimes, that there's practically a million ways to break them into a million pieces."

"I still don't get it —"

"What I'm saying is this, Davie. If you wanted to get rid of a five-years-old boy, if he was in your way or you didn't like him, you wouldn't have to kill him and take the chance you'll get arrested for murder. You could be much smarter. You could work on him a little, tell him things, frighten him and confuse him, and eventually get him to do some crazy thing so he'd have an accident and get killed."

This statement stunned me. I didn't know how to take it. I felt there was a glimmer of meaning in Mom's words, but I couldn't quite see it.

"I'm talking, Davie," Mom said, "about all that stealing which little Kenny did. Nowadays there's so much talk from psychiatry, everybody you meet thinks he's another

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Sigmund Freed. Somebody does something we don't understand, so right away we say, 'Ha, ha! It's psychiatrical! It's a Papa fixation! It's an infra-red complex!' But sometimes, Davie, things have got a simple, obvious explanation — if you only take a little trouble and look at them.

"This last week, before his Uncle Nelson gets killed, little Kenny spends all his time stealing his Papa's things. So naturally you come to the conclusion, he wants to take his Papa's place and get rid of his uncle. But one thing you're forgetting — little Kenny didn't just steal his Papa's things, he stole only certain *particular* things. When he tore open the box in the closet for his Papa's opera cape, he didn't touch his Papa's books or papers. When he went through the storeroom for his Papa's uniforms, he didn't bother about his Papa's civilian suits. When he opened up his Mama's jewel case, he didn't take away his Papa's cufflinks, he only took his Papa's medal. So isn't this interesting that he only takes a certain type thing belonging to his Papa? His Papa's *uniform*, his Papa's *insignia*, his Papa's *medal* — he only takes things which are connected with his Papa's work as an Air Force pilot."

"Yes, that's true, Mom. But what does it prove? Besides," I added suddenly, "he took the opera cape! What does the opera cape have to do with the Air Force?"

"The opera cape is the whole answer, Davie. A little boy is interested in stealing everything that his Papa used in the Air Force — but he also steals his Papa's opera cape. He steals it once, twice, three times. Such anxiousness to get hold of this opera cape! What's it so important for? A little idea comes into my head, and I ask you the question; what books does he read? The answer is like I expected. Comic books — but which comic books? Cowboy books? Detective books? Pirate treasure books? No. This little Kenny, he's interested in other subjects. Space traveling, Superman, Batman. And Superman and Batman, when they go flying through the air, what is it that they're always wearing, streaming away behind them, puffing out from the wind?"

"A big long flowing cape!" I cried — and the light dawned.

"What else? So it isn't such a mixed-up *kasha* any more, is it? It's as clear as a consommé now. A common, normal, boyish thing was going on in little Kenny's head, a thing which lots of little boys go through, a thing which causes plenty little accidents and some big ones every year. Little Kenny got it into his head that he was going to fly!"

"Of course," I said, almost with a groan. "I should've seen it all along. I remember, one summer when I was six, three of us climbed a tree in Uncle Dan's backyard — But we lost our nerve at the last minute."

"This I never heard before," Mom said, giving me a sharp look. Then she shrugged. "And such a natural thing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for little Kenny. His Papa used to be an Air Force pilot. Flying was a regular topic of conversation in his house. And his Papa was a hero to him. And he's a boy who don't have many friends. A strong active boy, but too small to play with the other boys in the neighborhood. They laugh at him maybe. They tell him to go away, he's a midget, what good could *he* be on the team? It's a terrible torture to him. What else does he want in this world except a chance to show them how wrong they are, to do something absolutely wonderful even though he *is* small, so that from then on they'll be happy to have him on the team?

"Yesterday morning was the big moment, like you say. He was looking determined when he went up to the roof — not because he was going to kill somebody, but because he was finally going to put on his long cape, and maybe also part of his Papa's uniform and his Papa's insignia, and fly off from the roof. This was why he wouldn't eat breakfast or drink any water. Because he wanted to be as light as he could —"

"I get it, Mom. And then, just as he was about to climb up on the ledge, his Uncle Nelson realized what was happening. He tried to stop the kid. He rushed at him. Kenneth sidestepped. Nelson lost his balance and fell off the roof instead."

"Almost," Mom said. "Not exactly. You forgot the most important detail. A little boy gets a crazy idea in his head. 'I can fly,' he says. 'I'll go up to the roof and try it.' But little Kenny didn't get this idea all of a sudden. He got it over a week ago. He stole his Papa's uniform because he knew his Papa could never fly without it, and he wanted its mysterious power to come to him. He stole Papa's medal and slept with it under his pillow, the way little children sleep on a tooth — so he could have his wish to fly in the air like Papa. He stole Papa's long opera cape for his wings. So clever, so psychiatrical — to me this means only one thing. Little Kenny didn't get the idea all by himself.

"Oh, yes, he was *ready* for the idea. This I admit. He was lonely, he was full of imagination, his big hero was his Papa the Air Force pilot. You and the Homicide Squad was closer than you thought, Davie, when you said that the whole case depended on the little boy's feelings for his Papa. What you didn't see was that somebody had to work on these feelings. Stealing the uniforms, using the opera cape, sleeping on the medal — these are schemes which would appeal to a little boy, but which a five-years-old boy wouldn't be able to think up himself. Somebody else —"

"But who is this somebody, Mom? Agnes Fisher herself? I can't believe it. Such a pretty scatterbrained woman — and she really loves her son. One of the servants maybe? How about the cook, the one who suddenly quit a few days before the accident?"

Mom gave a snort. "Foolishness. A

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cook who ups and leaves, nowadays it's a common occurrence. It would be a miracle if the cook *didn't* up and leave. The answer isn't so complicated, Davie. Look at it this way. The big day is here. Little Kenny is going to fly. He's nervous. He eats no breakfast. He goes up to the roof like a criminal going to the electrical chair. Two hours he's up there, but he can't bring himself to get started. The person who's put this idea in his head, he don't dare go away until he's sure little Kenny is really going to jump. So finally he says to the boy, 'It's very simple. Here, I'll show you exactly how you begin. I'll climb up on the ledge. I'll flap my arms like a bird. I'll do everything except fly — which I couldn't do, because I'm too big and heavy —' "

"Wait a second, Mom! Are you saying that Nelson Fisher was behind his nephew's crazy behavior?"

"Who else? Who acted very peculiar for a grown man, ignoring the company of people his own age and spending his time with a little five-years-old? Who was lonely and sick and in a terrible state because his life as a plane pilot was over? Who could think to himself, 'This sister-in-law of mine likes me already. She could be mine, along with her house and her money — if only this little brat was out of the way'? And who was it, after the first jealousy wore off, that had the most influence over little Kenny? Who did little Kenny hero-worship and believe everything he said — especially on the subject of flying, because wasn't his Uncle Nelson an Air Force pilot like his Papa used to be? And last but not littlest, who was up on the roof with little Kenny all morning? Nelson, exclusively Nelson. He climbed on the ledge, he flapped his arms, he shouted, 'Look, Kenny, see how easy it is? Why are you hesitating, Kenny? Why are you acting scared? *Why, Kenny, why?*' — and then he fell over himself."

The picture before my eyes fascinated me, kept me silent for a moment. Then I said, "But how did it happen, Mom? What made him lose his balance and fall from the ledge?"

Mom frowned. "This was a problem. For a while it bothered me. And then it came to me, and I asked you about the weather. It was a bright, hot, sunny morning, you said. So I put myself in this no-good Nelson's place. I'm excited. I'm so close to what I've been wanting and working for. And I'm a man who had malaria, a man who still gets dizzy spells. I climb up on a ledge — a narrow ledge, four storys up, and when I look down I see how far it is to the ground. And the sun is so hot, and it is beating down on me, I flap my arms, I yell at the little boy, then everything begins to dance in front of me. It is one of my dizzy spells. My God, I'm falling — I'm flying —" And Mom let her voice trail off solemnly.

After a pause, I laughed out loud, I couldn't help myself. "Mom, you don't know how grateful I am. A

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

five-year-old murderer — we've been hating the idea all day. What a relief for the boys down at Homicide!"

"What a relief for the Mama," said Mom, in a low voice.

I looked at her a moment. And then I thought I'd have a little fun with her. "But you still haven't proved your main point, Mom," I said, pretending to be very serious. "You still haven't proved that it's a good thing to have kids, that they aren't all little monsters."

Mom's head snapped up. "I haven't proved it? Who said so? Didn't I show you that this Kenny is a sweet, innocent, intelligent little child?"

"Yes, Mom. But what about Nelson? Nelson was somebody's child once."

"Nelson?" Mom gaped at me, almost at a loss for words. Then her voice grew very fierce. "Nelson don't mean nothing! What kind of talk is this, bringing up Nelson as an argument?"

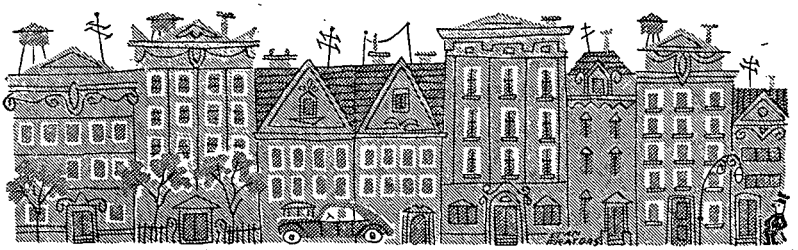
"I don't know, Mom." I shrugged my shoulders elaborately. "Shirley and I will have to do a lot of thinking about this. We'd love to have a kid like Kenneth. But suppose that kid grew up to be like Nelson. It's quite a problem."

"It's no problem!" Mom shook her head back and forth energetically. "Don't talk like that — a son of mine! Don't get a prejudice against children, I beg you, Davie. Little children — little grandchildren — they're the most beautiful thing in the world. Sometimes I think they're the *only* beautiful thing in the world."

Then it happened — something I never thought I'd see. A mist came into Mom's eyes, a trembling over her lips, and while I stared in amazement, Mom shed a tear.

I was terribly ashamed of myself. "Please, Mom," I said, "I was only fooling."

She recovered herself instantly. She got to her feet, her eyes dry again. "So was I!" she snorted. Then she stamped out indignantly to fetch the nesselrode pie.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EQMM's DETECTIVE DIRECTORY

edited by ROBERT P. MILLS

COLD POISON *by STUART PALMER* (MILL-MORROW, $2.75)	"Enjoyable burlesk seasoning in swift and topsy turvy puzzle." (DD)	"Usual zany movie types . . . enhance an otherwise ordinary yarn. Playful." (AdV)
A POLICEMAN AT THE DOOR *by CAROL CARNAC* (CRIME CLUB, $2.75)	"A bit slow, but the solution is clever." (FC)	"Intelligent, lively job save for genealogical safaris. *Cum laude.*" (SC)
QUIET UNDER THE SUN *by KEVIN FITZGERALD* (LITTLE, BROWN, $3.)	". . . the subversive plot . . . is a pretty preposterous one, but . . . grand fun . . ." (AB)	". . . though the plot is a bit silly, you'll enjoy yourself. Fun to read." (AdV)
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL *by SELDON TRUSS* (CRIME CLUB, $2.75)	"Smoothly concocted mystery entertainment with serious detecting and drollery neatly blended." (DD)	". . . a hair tingling opening . . . few mystery fans will be able to put it down." (H-M)
THE BLIND SPOT *by JOHN CREASEY* (HARPER, $2.50)	"A far above average Scotland Yard tale . . ." (FC)	"Villainy rather too grandiose, but tension holds nicely. His best yet." (SC)
EVIL IN THE HOUSE *by ELBUR FORD* (MORROW, $2.75)	". . . this version . . . seems a pretty drab affair . . . reasonably faithful, but lifeless . . ." (AB)	". . . a superb novel of suspense. Don't miss it." (FC)
HAVE A LOVELY FUNERAL *by A. T. HOPKINS* (RINEHART, $2.50)	". . . a collection of cliches . . . narrated with no focus of viewpoint or interest." (AB)	"Lively, tart, and refreshing yarn . . . Excellent fun." (AdV)
HIGH RENDEZVOUS *by KATHLEEN MOORE KNIGHT* (CRIME CLUB, $2.75)	". . . well planned, the ending a neat surprise. Excellent entertainment." (FC)	"Villain is unbelievable . . . but somehow you read right on to the end. Slightly excessive." (AdV)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine rounds up the judgment of reviewers across the country. The key on the right gives sources.

"Clue about fingers comes too late, and villain's rather obvious, but what fun nevertheless." (LGO)	". . . good fun . . . a sharp inside view of one fascinating facet of Hollywood." (DBH)	
". . . easygoing, absorbing and filled with delightful characters." (LGO)	". . . another good detective story from Carol Carnac's versatile pen." (DBH)	*KEY TO REVIEW SOURCES*
". . . very worthwhile reading, decidedly above average, absorbing." (FC)	"Dizzy yarn, but nice setting, nice folks, nice writing save all. Good fun." (SC)	AB: *Anthony Boucher in the New York Times*
"Good entertainment." (LGO)	"A spine chiller by an experienced writer of successful suspense stories." (FP)	FC: *Frances Crane in the Evansville Press*
". . . attacks give an effect of monotony . . . but the yarn is exciting just the same." (LGO)	"A strictly top drawer story." (FP)	SC: *Sergeant Cuff in The Saturday Review*
"Real yarn, often told by experts, still has big edge. Truth beats fiction." (SC)	". . . an engrossing story." (DBH)	DD: *Drexel Drake in the Chicago Tribune*
"Intricately entangled plot with bewildering shifts in action." (DD)	"One of those family affairs; nice, but parlor too crowded. Good, save as noted." (SC)	H-M: *Brett Halliday and Helen McCloy in the Fairfield County Fair*
"A charming funicular railway plays a major part in some highly unlikely melodrama." (LGO)	". . . notable for atmosphere and a dramatic climax." (FP)	DBH: *Dorothy B. Hughes in the Albuquerque Tribune*
		LGO: *Lenore Glen Offord in the San Francisco Chronicle*
		FP: *Fay Profilet in the Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*
		AdV: *Avis de Voto in the Boston Globe*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WINNER OF A THIRD PRIZE

When we published Hayden Howard's "Pass the Bottle" last year, we promised you more facts about the author himself. Here they are: Mr. Howard is now in his late twenties, which is very young indeed; his physique is, to quote, "elongated." After wrestling a couple of years with engineering at U.C.L.A., Mr. Howard worked briefly as a milkman and a house painter, then switched to U. of C. for a degree in social science. His ambition to be a professor of sociology was interrupted by necessary money-making ventures as a stationer's salesman and census taker, but finally he returned to U. of C. for graduate work. During this trying period, Mr. Howard turned to writing fiction for, as he phrased it, "mental relaxation." And then he was lost. For he is now writing full tilt, although he admits that in many ways and on many scores he is "still fumbling in the dark." (Who isn't, brother?)

Hayden Howard's latest prize-winning story is one of the most difficult types of fiction to write — an historical detective story. The action takes place in the America of 1722 — but we will let the author tell you more about the significance of the scene and the times in the tale itself, and in a short postscript. The point is, historical detective stories are not everybody's meat — although they shouldn't be anyone's poison. Personally, we have a deep fondness for historical detection — especially when it has a stature approaching either fact or folklore, and even more especially when it parallels today's problems and throws light and insight on the conflicts and insecurities now facing us.

Mr. Howard's story is a wonderful conception, with fascinating meanings and implications, and it has (although perhaps we should not warn you even this much) a terrific kick at the end. Whatever your penchant for or prejudice against historical detective stories, we think you will enjoy this one hugely.

Mr. Howard's two stories — a Black Mask tough 'tec and a serious historical detective story — illustrate not only the author's versatility but also what a Black Mask type of writer can do for a change of pace, and vice versa. So again we take an opportunity to invite all writers to do originals for our Black Mask department. We encourage you to explore, in the highest tradition of the hardboiled school, the seamy side of life — to illuminate, with all the integrity and artistry at your command, the back alleys and dark streets of crime and its moral concomitant, punishment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE DIPPING OF THE CANDLEMAKER

by HAYDEN HOWARD

ON A FROSTY MORN, WHEN A rigid gentleman, wigg'd, powder'd, and exhaling vapours like a dragon, stamp'd into our printing-house with his red cloak flung back in anger, I smiled secretly at the stick of type I was composing. For here was Colonel Clinton of the Assembly.

Now, thought I, it is my brother James's turn to bend the knee!

While breaking our fast, we had fallen into another of our disputations, and he, unwilling to admit himself trapp'd in contradiction by my devious Socratic inquiries, beat me passionately, which I took extreamly amiss; and, thinking my apprenticeship to him very tedious, I was wishing for some means of shortening it.

Most merrily I listen'd to Colonel Clinton berate him for some political piece lately appearing in our weekly newspaper. Yet I admired my brother for refusing to give up the name of its author who had made so free with our Massachusetts Assembly.

As the Colonel's threats crimson'd my brother, I began to fear the loosing of his too-ready fist. In this uneasy year of King George, 1722, to strike a member of the Assembly would mean something worse than the pillory.

But my brother was, for the moment, saved; such an outcry arising from Queen Street that both men rush'd to the doorway. I glanced at my work, an advertisement for the sale of several Palatine maids, time of most of them five years. Tho' my brother might beat me again, I set aside my composing stick and ran after them on to the cobblestones. For the shouting had grown from "Seize him" to "Murder, murder most foule!" — which made me most curious.

All Boston seem'd running: hardy ropewalkmen, unkempt 'prentices, grimy pewterers jostled by His Majesty's grenadiers flush'd as red as their coats from grog, and good-wives scurrying with their gowns above their ankles and their tongues a-wagging. I was surprised to see the mob revolving beneath the wooden boot that advertised the shoemaker's stall; they were clamouring around the old cobbler and the huge Irish 'prentice lad he held as easily as a partner in a dance.

The lad, Dennis O'Leary, apprentice to the candlemaker, stood meekly downcast, while round them, leaping like a bewigg'd frog in his excitement, shouted the candlemaker's tenant, little Warwick Lowther, a silversmith whose voice was the largest part of him: "Murder, he has murder'd his master!"

"Here, man, be silent!" Colonel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Clinton snapp'd, and order'd that the lad be march'd back to the candlemaker's to view his abominable crime and confess to save his soul.

Thinking to remain out of my brother's notice, I follow'd at the coattails of the crowd. Dennis was shaking his red locks in confusion, in obvious denial as they propell'd him into the cavernous shop and into its dim after-part, where their numbers obstructed my curiosity.

Above their heads the rafters rose steeply to the high wall which divided the house in halves. I knew the ground floor of the other half to be the sleeping quarters of the candlemaker, named Mr. Gill, and his intemperate uncle, and also of Dennis. Above it was a garret, reach'd by the narrow staircase fix'd to this side of the wall and tenanted by little Warwick Lowther, silversmith, and his wife and brood of six or seven.

I climb'd upon the silversmith's table in the fore-part of the shop, being careful not to upset his neatly hammer'd porringers, sauce boats, wall sconces, and candlesticks, and wondering that some knave might not take this opportunity to steal them. For, lately, many Boston houses had been enter'd for their silver. A coldness slosh'd upon my shoe. I perceived I had jostled a pail of fresh beer, but thought no more of this as I stared over the heads of the crowd at a most unnatural sight.

Beneath the horizontal spokes of Mr. Gill's candle-dipping machine, the mammoth kettle of wax seem'd stuff'd with the blue broadcloth from which coats are sewn. Two bulbous lumps of the cloth droop'd over the edge of the kettle, and from them hung gray woolens, narrowing to white stockings, which terminated in large leather shoes.

"Draw him out," the Colonel order'd.

With a greasily osculating sound, the candlemaker's shoulders and head were withdrawn from his kettle. The breathless room sweeten'd with the fragrance of bayberry wax. A horrid sight Mr. Gill's corpse made, with the greenish wax flowing downward on his features as if he were a waxwork during the Great Fire.

Around his hips, which had been at the surface of the kettle, the harden'd wax gave him strange proportions. And a wag blurted: "Silversmiths oft hammer their thumbs, but never before has a candlemaker dipp'd himself."

Some titter'd, some reproved, all talk'd. My brother thrust his hand into the kettle, but instantly withdrew it, the pan of coals beneath not being wholly expired. Recoursing to the poker, he hook'd out Mr. Gill's sodden wig. Never one to remain a modest spectator, he thrust it at Dennis O'Leary's nose, shouting: "Confess, I say! Here is the evidence. Blood upon your master's wig."

Altho' this show'd Mr. Gill had been struck down, I wonder'd that my brother was so easily convinced of Dennis's guilt. For a head bleeds

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whether struck by an apprentice or another. And I lean'd forward to hear the Irish lad's denial.

"God witness, sir," Dennis cried, "I found him thus — when I return'd from the *Sailor's Pleasure*. He'd sent me for a pail of beer. I would o' pull'd him out. But Mr. Lowther rush'd at me. He shouted 'Murder' and — chased me into the street."

"He fled from his conscience," the little silversmith retorted, his own fair and freckled complexion as flush'd as the boy's.

"See the terror of guilt upon the lad's face," my brother added.

Colonel Clinton silenced them with a dagger'd glance. I, too, was angered by my brother, believing his opinion to be poison'd against all apprentices. And, further, I consider'd Dennis my friend, lately we having done much walking together at dusk along the ship-wharves, exchanging our grievances.

I knew full well the mindless drudgery of candlemaking, my own father being a tallow chandler, and I his unwilling helper, boiling tallow, straining tallow, pouring tallow into moulds, until I was twelve and he, detecting I would run away to sea, apprenticed me to my brother to learn the printing trade. My brother had since treated me, I consider'd, no better than a bound-boy. I did not acknowledge that my overweening tongue was the chief cause of this. And Dennis now seem'd a symbol of myself persecuted.

I resolved to speak up for him, tho': those who in quarrels interpose, must often wipe a bloody nose. Prudently, I climbed down from the table so that my brother might not see who had spoken.

"Witness how the wax has harden'd about the waist," I cried. "From this I deduce that Mr. Gill has been a long time in his kettle, cooling. Yet we know the lad has but recently return'd. Here, on the table, his pail of beer still has a head on it."

This last turn'd the heads of the crowd, and my brother, with knitting brows, recognized me.

"'Tis true!" the old cobbler exclaim'd. "The boy had pass'd my bench with his pail of beer and before twenty pegs were driven I heard shouts of 'Seize him' and he return'd like a cut-purse pursued."

Even little Warwick Lowther clapp'd his hand to his wig. "'Tis true! My apologies. When I left my wife and children and came on to the stair, I observed the boy bending strangely over his master down there, and I rush'd to interfere. 'Twas only his flight that convinced me of his guilt."

The little silversmith made his way to his landlord's apprentice and, reaching up, placed his hand upon the lad's shoulder. "Tho' Dennis has been employ'd here but a short time, I have observed him to be mild of temper. Yet there is another with whom my landlord often exchanged blows."

"Blossom!" the apprentice gasp'd.

"Aye, Mr. Gill's uncle it well may be," Warwick Lowther replied.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All look'd about. Blossom Gill was so called for the grog blossoms studding his corpulent visage. An old man and living on his nephew's charity, nevertheless he would not take orders in good spirit from the candlemaker, and their quarrelling could be heard even to our printing-shop, particularly when they had both been taking spirits of another order.

"Look for Blossom under the horses' legs," my brother laughed.

"He should have return'd by now," Warwick Lowther suggested, "if he were innocent. After the lad set out for the *Sailor's Pleasure*, a very considerable walk, Mr. Gill ask'd his uncle to fetch the cart, for they would go bayberrying on the morrow. Blossom retorted for him to fetch it himself. And tho' it is less than a hundred paces from this rear doorway to the wheelwright's, they were still squabbling when I ascended the stairway to take my tea in a less blasphemous atmosphere."

The little silversmith raised his forefinger with the questioning gesture of a minister of the gospel. "If Blossom set out for the cart, why did he not return before the boy? The expectation of beer would have quickened his pace. You can see the cart is not at the rear doorway. Therefore, I fear Blossom persisted in his refusal to fetch it, and blows were exchanged. Then rage overcame all mercy. Murder! Affrighted by his deed, the old man has fled."

"After him! Before he escapes to the ships!" my brother cried.

"Silence!" Colonel Clinton's voice cracked over the mob like a carter's whip, and he directed some men to run to the Long Wharf, others in the direction of the Fort, still others toward the Common and the Charles River, and a final group, including my brother James and myself, to inquire at the wheelwright's, then search the nearby taverns and stables.

But he call'd me back. I must remain to watch that nothing be stolen from the shop. To this I was not averse, my curiosity to examine the mark of the blow, to infer the weapon employ'd, to search the shop for it, being far greater than any boyish urge to fox-hound through the streets after a drunken old man.

At the front of the shop, on Warwick Lowther's work bench, none of the hammers and mallets show'd blood. In the main door, however, I noticed the long iron key to have been left carelessly in the lock. Since any knave might remove it, in order to return stealthily by night and attack the silversmith's strong-box, I took the key out, and shook my head. For its crude bit had but a single notch. The lock was single-warded. A child could have pick'd it.

I carried the key to Dennis, who sat upon the staircase with his face buried between his hands so that his red hair appear'd to be a pile of flame above them. When he look'd up, I ask'd him kindly: "Did your master, forgetting, leave his key in the door?"

"It is my key," he blurted. "Mr. Gill gave it to me, God rest his soul.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unlock'd the door, I did, and saw Mr. Gill's legs hanging from the kettle. I set down the pail and rush'd to pull him out, forgetting the key."

"Was there a reason the shop was not open for trade?" I ask'd.

"I know it not," he sighed. "I was surprised the door would not open, and quickly unlock'd it. For Mr. Gill and his uncle seem'd always impatient for their beer. Believe me, I found my master thus!" Fear raised the pitch of his voice. "You shan't tell of the threats I made against him whilst you and I walk'd on the ship-wharves?"

"Empty threats are common among apprentices," I said slowly, eyeing the trapezoid of sunlight that lay from the rear doorway across the wax'd floor, the huge kettle, and the base of the candle-dipping machine. "Was the rear door also closed?"

"My head was pounding too fast for me to notice such little things," Dennis replied.

"Was there sunlight upon the kettle or upon your master's blue coat-tails?" I persisted.

"Aye!" the Irish lad exclaim'd, wonderingly. "Into the dimness of the shop I came, and the first sight that struck my eyes was a spot of bright blue."

"So the rear door was left open," I mused. "Is this usual?"

Dennis nodded. "It helps draw off the wax vapours."

"But is it usual, the rear door open when the front door is lock'd?" I continued, to which he shook his tousled head.

I would have ask'd him whether Blossom Gill and Warwick Lowther own'd keys to the door, but this seem'd certain. And, a mouth being better closed when there is no longer wisdom behind it, I held my peace and review'd the circumstances: the candlemaker dead in his kettle, Warwick Lowther above stairs drinking his tea, the front door lock'd, the rear door open. The weapon — here I realized I had been foolishly searching for it before examining the wound, which would show whether the weapon be sharp or blunt, light or heavy, smooth or irregular.

Before I could reach the corpse, Colonel Clinton shouted angrily: "Here, you, lad, where has Lowther gone? The villain, he has fled! Have you been asleep, you dolt?"

Tho' I had been instructed to watch the silver, not the silversmith, I flush'd and ran up the stairs to Warwick Lowther's garret. His wife, a slight, dark-hair'd woman much sagg'd from child-bearing, retorted he was not there and follow'd me down.

"All is safe, sir," I assured the Colonel, "for his wife and children are still here."

Colonel Clinton's eyes narrow'd at Mrs. Lowther, and he mutter'd: "Nevertheless, men have deserted their families to preserve their own necks."

"Mr. Lowther has gone with the others," she rebuff'd him bravely, "to search for that evil old man. Fight, fight, it is all those two kins-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men did. I should have known it would end this way. Their drunken voices rose nightly to our quarters as if they were shouting up a hollow tree."

Embarrass'd, hoping the little silversmith had not deserted, leaving her to fend for six or seven young ones, I knelt beside the corpse. Mr. Gill's waxen face had now harden'd so that he seem'd a man frozen in green ice, and I peel'd away the greenish wax adhering to his closely tonsured yellow hair. The indentation on the back of his skull, I would have wager'd a sovereign, was made by the curved and bluntly pointed end of the poker.

Since my brother had employ'd the poker to retrieve the deceased's wig, blood could no longer be seen upon it. And I wonder'd if there might be certain chemicals which, applied to even the smallest trace of blood, would give off an accusing smoke or other indication that here was the victim's life-blood.

Even more useful, I ponder'd, would be a white powder which, sprinkled on the suspect's hand, would be distinctively color'd by the oil of his skin. The same white powder being sprinkled on the handle of the poker would turn a like colour if the villain had gripped it. But, replied the less fanciful side of my intellect, a murder weapon is immediately pass'd around by the curious, so that a useless rainbow-colour'd powder would invariably be the result.

What would completely simplify this life-and-death problem, I mused, and rule out all danger of faulty human deductions, as well as the need for the foregoing inventions, would be a clockwork mounted beside a horn which concentrates the suspect's voice upon a brass cymbal. Perhaps experiment would show that when a man utters a lie, his voice produces such unnatural vibrations that the cymbal, tuned to them alone, would vibrate. This motion could be transmitted by means of a lever to the clockwork, which would then strike a chime, infallibly declaring the falsehood.

I stood up and examin'd the bleach'd wig hairs clinging to the once or twice dipp'd wicks on the dipping frame above the kettle. Since invention of the foregoing mechanisms, if possible at all, would require more time and knowledge than was presently at my disposal, I determined that my truth-machine must be constructed of Pure Reason, systematically applied. For, having interceded once in this inquiry, my youthful pride would not permit me to withdraw from it.

Yet, I warn'd myself, I must not hazard an opinion as to the identity of the murderer. Rather, I should arrange the evidence as if it were columns of figures, and let the sum totals finally determine the guilt. Otherwise, I will tend to notice and consider mainly the evidence pointing toward the most likely suspect, and thereby risk building a false case. This is because, being a reason-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able creature, I am able to find reasons for anything I have decided to believe. And today a man's life is at stake.

Turning, I observed on the next frame of wicks a few strangely short hairs of fiery red. And glancing covertly at my Irish friend, I felt my resolve of mathematical detachment sorely tax'd.

At least the red hairs are on a different frame from the white wig hairs, I puzzled, and turn'd again to the candle-dipping machine.

It consisted of a large cart-wheel mounted horizontally atop a stout post higher than my head. The rim had been saw'd out, leaving the six spokes, and loop'd from the end of each spoke by a leather strap was a dipping frame of cross'd dowels, with long wicks hanging from them nearly to the kettle.

In operation, each frame, in its turn, was taken down by hand from its spoke and lower'd, its wicks descending into the liquid wax, then hung up again for the wax to harden, the machine being turn'd so that the next frame might be then taken down.

Thus, I would have expected the murderer's hair, as he bent the candlemaker into the kettle, to have brush'd against the *same* frame of wicks as did Mr. Gill's white wig.

Yet I wonder'd if Dennis might have dallied outside with his empty pail until the old man finally went for the cart and the silversmith mounted to his garret. Then the strong lad might swiftly have return'd, struck down and drown'd his master in wax, lock'd the front door so that no customer might enter and discover the body too soon, then hurried to the *Sailor's Pleasure.*

The other two would testify he left before them, and because of the hardness of the wax and the head on the beer when he return'd to discover the body, it would seem the murder had been done some time before, in his absence.

I could see the streaks of wax gleaming on Dennis's red hair.

Yet this is not conclusive, I argued, for he works often at the dipping machine. Further, he would have expected the old man to return before him. Still further, he would not have fled in such a guilty manner when Warwick Lowther rush'd down the stairs at him; yet one never knows how one will react with his life in the balance.

I must cease these suppositions, I thought sternly, and gather more substance. A house is not constructed by first hammering together the roof in empty air.

Examining the double-boilers on the hearth, I reflected that making bayberry candles would be less onerous than pouring tallow ones as I had done. The excursions to gather berries would be pleasant, and boiling the wax from them would produce a woodsy fragrance rather than the slaughterhouse stench of boiling tallow. Because the bayberry wax shrinks on cooling, it cannot be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pour'd in molds, and is therefore dipp'd — a pleasant, rhythmic labour like press-work. I began to think the candlemaker's apprentice complain'd too much.

And I toy'd with one of the greenish candles. It did not feel greasy, like a tallow candle. Tho' of more irregular shape than cast candles, a greater price was ask'd, for bayberry candles will not droop against the wall in hot weather, and the snuff is pleasant rather than foul. The smoke is consider'd an aid for parted lovers; each lighting a bayberry candle at the appointed hour, tho' the Atlantic Ocean separate them, the two smokes are believed to mingle.

I wonder'd that, with two to help him, Mr. Gill had not produced larger quantities of candles and thus offer'd really worrisome competition to my father. Above the mantel was painted the old rhyme:

A bayberry candle
Burn'd to the socket
Brings luck to the house
And gold to the pocket.

I doubted it had brought much gold to Mr. Gill's pocket. For laziness travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes him. Yet the candlemaker was still known as a buyer of expensive trifles, and I wonder'd that Warwick Lowther's rent was enough to support Mr. Gill's continuing extravagance.

Thus I began to smell a dead mouse.

Indeed I now doubted that the little silversmith was capable of paying any rent at all. He was said to have fled Providence to avoid debtor's prison, and I thought it unlikely he would better his lot here, since many Massachusetts folk would as soon commission their silverware from a Papist, or Lucifer himself, as from a Rhode Island free-thinker. And Boston already housed an excellent silversmith.

With seven or eight mouths to feed, Warwick Lowther must scent the foul odour of a debtor's prison no matter which way the wind blows. Were he a larger, stronger man he might exchange his tools and silver for an axe, a plow, and oxen, and escape to the wilderness, westward into the valley of the Connecticut River, where Indians would take more than his wig. But that he had escaped from Providence with silver enough to make the articles display'd upon his table was puzzle enough for me.

Suddenly a portion of the mob flow'd back into the shop, their teeth showing with satisfaction, for they dragg'd Blossom Gill in their midst. Prominent among them, little Warwick Lowther bent a knee to the Colonel. "Sir, we discover'd him in a ditch behind the wheelwright's."

"Dead drunk," my brother James added, and the Colonel afforded my kin such an ill-temper'd glance he would have been wiser to have removed himself at once to our printing-house.

Hulking old Blossom away'd between the pushing hands of his cap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tors. He blink'd like an owl in the daylight, and when Colonel Clinton snapp'd at him: "Confess!", he fell heavily to his knees and the mob guffaw'd. The old man's limbs would not support him. The Colonel whirl'd about, unable to silence the mob, and pointed his ring'd hand at the body of Mr. Gill.

"You, sot, can you see what *that* is?" the Colonel cried.

There was no answer, for Blossom Gill had sunk his elbows and forehead to the floor, drunk as an Iroquois. Colonel Clinton, sliding forward like a dancing-master, kick'd him smartly. "Get up, I say!"

Disliking to see even a confirm'd drammer kick'd, even by a gentleman, I put my arm under the old man's, my brother took the other, and we lifted Blossom upright. The Colonel then kick'd his leg with such force he near brought down the three of us. This seem'd, however, to waken the old man, and he mutter'd: "It ish my brother's son."

"Why did you not return at once with the cart?" the Colonel demanded.

"Wush waiting for it."

"In a ditch?" Colonel Clinton demanded. "Why did you not return? You knew the boy had been sent for beer!"

"Bottle of rum," Blossom gurgled. "Made my nephew give it to me, or I will go to the mashi-magistrate and we shwing together."

The Colonel's eyes narrow'd. "Smugglers, eh, like half of these people. So, you murder'd your nephew for a bottle of rum. Speak up, I say!"

"Not shmugglers," the old man mutter'd, but the mob had grown so noisy, I believe the Colonel thought Blossom had mouth'd some imprecation against him; for he deliver'd another savage kick.

"In the Name of the King, confess!" Colonel Clinton raged, and, receiving no answer, set to kicking him with such force the old man jerk'd in our arms like Kidd upon the gallows.

"Hold, sir," my brother protested, and express'd himself in somewhat contradiction to his own previously officious conduct. "Boston is no longer a hamlet without proper magistrates; therefore these men should be speedily brought before them. Private enquiry is usurpation."

This insulted the Colonel extreamly, and he turn'd to the mob. "Upon my orders, throw this fork-tongued printer's devil into the street!" And there being a few in every crowd who tug their forelocks and jump to obey the meanest order so long as it springs from someone they consider of exalted rank, my brother was dragg'd, loudly protesting, from the shop.

I was allow'd to remain, I think, because the Colonel had forgotten whose apprentice I was and, perchance, imagined me a useful lackey, though a half-wit. On my part, I resolved to disappoint him as to the latter.

"Pardon, sir," call'd the burly wheelwright who had jostled to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

front rank. "The old man did come for the cart, but in fixen one spoke, I broken another. Wait he does, and drink. The wheel, when iss finished, the old man iss not there."

The Colonel shrugg'd and again address'd Blossom Gill. "Confess, you toss-pot!"

The old man lolled against me as if requiring sleep, and I was reminded of a beast peculiar to this continent and call'd The Oppussum, which, when surrounded by huntsmen, feigns death, tho' whether through fright or cunning I do not know.

"Sir," Warwick Lowther politely interposed. "Note the bruise upon the old man's forehead. So often did the two of them come to blows, I fear'd it would end thus in tragedy. And note the stripes of wax upon his wig. No doubt these were acquired when he bent forward against the frame of wicks, while thrusting his nephew's head into the kettle."

"Quite correct," the Colonel replied, pleased. "I was about to announce the same conclusion. What do you say to that, sot?"

My own thought was this evidence was far from conclusive, since Blossom work'd often dipping candles, and wax upon his wig would have been more suspicious by its absence.

"I shay you'll shwing along 'o us, Warwick Lowther," the old man gurgled angrily, his grog blossoms lighting up like coals in a high wind. "You begging sho meek, please we let you go free to the wilderness and you'll never tell nor do us harm!"

Blossom Gill's mind seem'd fix'd on something that had been troubling him prior to the murder, for he raved on: "Ash this shilversmith where he got his silver, shir! I tell you, and a roof over hish head. My nephew takes him in to melt and rework and sell the silver we have acquired, yesh, *acquired*, hah! But we do not trust this little man, and my nephew ashts him to accompany him through the window of the Reverend Dr. Mather, to acquire silver, and to fit his little neck in the noose so that Warwick Lowther dare not inform!"

As Blossom sagg'd against me, I wonder'd that his tongue had grown so quickly nimble for one so deeply sotted, and he gasp'd thinly: "I — I wanted no part of thish. From the firsht, I had no part in it, and I would have gone to the authorities, but my nephew would have kill'd me. He shouted at thish little silversmith, 'I already own you, body and soul.' And Lowther finally said he would go with him. Tho' I warn'd against it, to-night is the night the window was to be forsh'd. But to-day my nephew ish murder'd!"

"If these men were the silver thieves," Warwick Lowther shouted clearly above the tumult, "I knew nothing of it."

"So your silver appearsh like shwallows from the mud, hah?" Blossom Gill challenged. "You dare not unlock the shtrong-box and show them Mr. Samuel Sewall's silver plate, much of it not yet melted into lumpsh, hah?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With his face red with anger beneath his white wig, the little silversmith drew a brass key from his waistcoat and march'd to the strong-box, which was of old oak, bound with much iron. He pointed a white finger at Blossom, saying: "Now give up your key, old fox!"

I saw the strong-box wore three locks, and by the time Blossom had dug his key from his small-clothes, Warwick Lowther had unlock'd his. Blossom's key was a clumsy, single-notched one and took much twisting before it would open its lock. The candlemaker's key could not be discover'd in his pockets, and I consider'd offering to pick his lock, but one's a fool who cannot conceal such wisdom. I held my peace and join'd them in searching the corpse. About its neck was a loop of string, which, being torn from its sheen of wax and drawn out, reveal'd the third key.

When the lid of the strong-box was raised, we found only a bag of foreign coins of small worth, a new silver spoon that had split from too much hammering, and some ancient account books. The old man look'd about wildly.

"Now you see he lies," Warwick Lowther said. "Ask the boy if Blossom is not lying so that my neck be stretch'd for murder instead of his own."

Dennis O'Leary, turning pale, mumbled he did not know. "I have not work'd here long."

"A blind boy!" Blossom Gill spat. "Not shuprising. Likely he help'd such a little man drown my nephew."

"Hang them all," a wag shouted. "That way they'll be equally assured of justice."

"Hold," cried a hand-rubbing tavern keeper of long and dripping nose, who had been probing about the dead man. "Colonel, Your Grace, all is resolved. See how the blow bloodied the back of the head rather than the top, as if the murderer could strike no higher. Therefore he was a little man. And only one of these three is short."

"Do not look so concern'd for your widow, silversmith," a wag shouted. "She can sell a child each year."

At this, I look'd up, and was not pleased to see on the staircase a whole row of little Lowthers, their faces aghast and flush'd red as their flaming red hair.

The Colonel, too, look'd displeased by this deduction of the tavern keeper, perchance having already determined Blossom Gill to be the murderer. And I was irritated by the tavern keeper's reasoning, which was weak, if not false, and resolved to confute it.

"I am puzzled, sir," I interceded loudly. "Would not a man bent over the kettle, dipping candle wicks, present the *back* of his head to attack from behind, no matter the assailant be a dwarf or a giant?"

"Exactly what I had decided," the Colonel declared. "There can be no doubt the murderer was this old house-pad. For a large, strong man was required to lift the candlemaker into his kettle."

This I doubted, the mouth of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kettle being no higher than a man's waist, so that the victim need only be push'd, rather than lifted. But I held my peace, for I was considering the more important matter of the young Lowthers' red hair. Their mother's hair was dark brown. Since I had never seen the silversmith without his wig, and since he was closely shaven and nearly hairless upon the wrists, I had never thought of him possessing hair, much less of it having colour. Yet, unless Mrs. Lowther had deceived him seven times at yearly intervals, I now suspected his hair was as red as Dennis O'Leary's.

So many contradictory deductions having confused the mob, and having shortened the tempers of some, they began to shout in unison: "Throw them in the millpond. All three. Let the pond decide their guilt."

Truly, a mob is a monster, with many heads and no brains.

"Silence!" the Colonel shouted, a sudden perspiration gleaming on his brow. "We are not examining witches. This admitted thief and murderer shall be speedily arraigned before the magistrates." And he seized the old man's elbow.

But Blossom Gill stood fast, tho' swaying, and cried at the mob: "I am innocent as a babe! 'Tis thish Rhode Island receiver of stolen property has murder'd my nephew."

The Colonel dragg'd Blossom forward a step, but the mob would not open to let them pass. They preferr'd a Massachusetts thief to any foreigner from Rhode Island. But chiefly they desired a raree show, and a cluster of bawling ropewalkmen began to shout: "String up all three for silver thievery. We must go back to work. Let the murderer be discover'd and judged in the next world."

Colonel Clinton stood gaping like a fish, uncertain whether to bluster or retreat. The mob, which in a sense had been his creature at the beginning, was his no longer. Having sown wind, he was reaping whirlwind.

Dennis too was dragg'd into the midst of them, pale and protesting. And I guess'd they would not listen, tho' they must know full well that an apprentice is helpless to prevent an ill-doing to his master, and dare not blab. His master's word would be taken over his, and revenge against his master might seal an apprentice's lips forever.

Apologies would not interest the mob any longer. I knew I must give them words they would listen to, and thus I shouted: "Colonel, I have irrefutable proof of the murderer!"

"Hear, hear," the mob clamour'd, many of them laughing, which irritated me extreamly.

The Colonel, to my surprise, glared; but, uncertain of the temper of the mob, he did not interfere when I carried forward two frames of wicks.

"On this frame," I cried, "are long white hairs from what would seem to be the wig of the deceased. On the other are a few strangely short red ones."

Before I could explain the next step in my deductions, they laid hold

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Dennis most painfully, ripping his clothing and even pulling out his long red hair. They show'd that a little understanding may be more harmful than none, shouting with joy as tho' they, the mob, had brilliantly solved the matter. Some even shouted for a rope.

I could not recapture their attention, and fear'd Dennis would be strung up before my eyes, the Colonel making no attempt to prevent it. Since all depended on this moment, I rush'd back to the kettle and scooped the iron shovel into the pan of blackened coals beneath. I raised the shovel full to shoulder height and, whirling, broadcast the warm coals upon the heads of the mob. Needless to say, this regain'd their attention.

At their angry bedlam I shouted: "Another of the three suspects has also red hair, but conceals it. Take off your wig, Warwick Lowther!"

And in doing so, he show'd that his seven children were his own, for his head was as red as theirs. Without the craven expression I had expected, he confronted the mob with his red stubble. Its colour seem'd the same as Dennis's unkempt red mop. The voices of the mob diminish'd.

"This fiddle-faddle about red hair, white hair, no hair, is of no consequence," Warwick Lowther stated firmly. "No doubt Dennis left his red hairs on the wicks while working at the dipping-machine. No more candles were dipp'd after he was sent for the beer. Thus, his red hairs are still there, and innocently enough."

"But *these* red hairs are all peculiarly short," I replied. "Most hairs coming loose from a head are long and old, dried at the roots, perchance, like last year's tall weeds; whilst short hairs are, for the most part, cuttings, not uprootings. If you will very closely examine the short hairs on this wick, you will see that all of them lack the small root that is so often present when hair falls out naturally. By drawing hairs from your comb or brush between your fingers, you will frequently feel this tiny root. Since these hairs lack it, I believe them to be the short hairs that are scatter'd about after a visit to the barber. And since your stubbled hair is cut often, Warwick Lowther, in order that your wig be comfortable, I believe these short hairs to be from your head. And more of them will be found clinging inside your wig."

"Of no consequence," the little silversmith cried, shifting his feet rapidly, his voice rising to the excited pitch with which he had accused Dennis while leaping about him on Queen Street. "Plotter! The red hairs are on a different frame than the white ones! Any fool knows that the murderer, bending his victim into the kettle, would touch his head above his victim's, thus leaving his hairs on the wicks of the *same* frame."

Before I could dispute this, he shouted: "The hairs could not be mine — unless this old man treacherously glued them there. For my hair is always cover'd; I protect my head with a wig!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As I stepp'd toward him, he cried: "Looking for stripes of wax on my hair, eh? You won't find them! For I have not been near the dipping machine, as the lad will testify. It is Blossom Gill who has wax upon his wig!"

And, whirling about, his own wig still clutch'd in his fist, Warwick Lowther show'd his back to me, and pointed an accusing finger at the old man. The mob seem'd even more confused, not many of them shouting, for most had tried to hear my explanation. But very few seem'd to have heard all of it, or understood it rightly.

Some ruffians came running back into the shop with a rope for Dennis. Others, whose wigs had been scorch'd by the coals, seem'd working up their anger to hang me alongside of the Irish lad. I had near despair'd of reasoning with the mob, when I remember'd that before me was a proof of Warwick Lowther's guilt which might convince even the dullest of them.

Since only a raree show would hold their attention, I leapt upon a bench and, waving my arms at the heavens, cried loudly and clearly: "Warwick Lowther, there is a witness to your crime!"

This recaptured their ears from their own voices. Of a sudden, their eyes seem'd like a myriad of shiny arrows drawn taut at me, and I began falteringly: "Good citizens of Boston —"

Then I realized if I reveal'd my final piece of evidence first, the explanation proving its importance might not be heard above the ensuing tumult. The silversmith might speak his way clear. With so unruly a mob, I must present my deductions in proper order for the grand total of them to be understood; and further I must present my thoughts entertainingly for them to be listen'd to.

"Warwick Lowther," I cried in a voice confident and strong for a humble apprentice, and continuous; for I fear'd interruption. "It is said that he who lies down with dogs shall rise up with fleas. Your bargain to handle suspicious silver, perchance in exchange for your use of the garret and shop, inevitably led you toward greater crimes. Mr. Gill decided you should be his accomplice in a robbery, that your increased guilt put you more fully in his power. To escape this, you waited till the old man and lad had gone out, then took off your wig, that it not be wax'd during the assault, and took up the poker; creeping behind Mr. Gill, you struck him down as he bent over his kettle."

"I say Holy Lightning shall strike you down!" Lowther cried.

"As you said yourself," I continued quickly, "the murderer bent his victim forward into the wax. You were careful that your head not touch the wicks above the kettle. And you hasten'd to lock the front door, that no customer enter and discover the body before the old man's return, for which you left the rear door open."

Warwick Lowther shouted a denial.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And I shouted back: "You are a skill'd workman, sir, and speedily open'd the other two locks of the strong-box, and removed the incriminating silver to a hiding place unknown to the old man. I'll wager, on taking these locks apart, we shall find unnatural scratches caused by your pick-lock."

At this, he swept up a fistful of tools, shouting he would break open the locks and prove me a liar. And I guess'd my prideful confidence had swell'd beyond my intellect; hastily, I overshouted him that, being a metal worker, he might as easily have filed his own keys, which surely proved the murder was not the result of a sudden rage.

"You plann'd that the old man discover the body," I shouted. "As he pull'd it out of the kettle, you would rush down the staircase crying 'Murder,' and your word would be taken over his. For Blossom's conflicts with his nephew were well known, and it is consider'd that a besotted man is not a truthful one, and, further, much wax might have been smear'd upon his clothing. Perchance, you hoped to incite the mob to close Blossom's throat with a rope before he could make plain the nature of your dealings with Mr. Gill. For three can keep a secret only when two of them are dead."

"But it was the lad he first accused," Colonel Clinton interposed somewhat sourly.

"Yes," I cried, "the little silversmith waited and waited, and Blossom did not return. All the while, he knew Dennis was striding closer with the pail of beer. In his fright, no doubt, he forgot the wax was cooling and that he should go down to stir the coals. And finally he heard Dennis unlock the front door, and his last hope of the old man returning in time was gone. There seem'd naught to do but rush down the staircase and accuse Dennis in his stead."

"False, false, 'tis a plot!" Warwick Lowther was exclaiming, and the mob began to clamour so that I must exert my lungs to the utmost.

"When the hardness of the wax freed Dennis from suspicion, you swiftly and cunningly diverted it to the old man, who was not there to defend himself," I shouted, and then took a thrust at the Colonel for evicting my brother. "You easily duped Colonel Clinton with your talk of a fresh battle between uncle and nephew, and of the stripes of wax upon Blossom's wig. You were confident there was no wax upon your own wig, and when I suggested your hair be red, you were not afraid to show it, believing no wax to be on your red stubble. Perchance you even look'd in a glass to be safe.

"Bring two looking-glasses," I cried.

When I bade him look at himself in one of them, he quickly did so, and shrugg'd, no doubt relieved. But I moved the second glass to the back of his head, as tho' I were his barber, and said: "Silversmith, when you sprang back from the kettle, your freshly cut hair brush'd the frame of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wicks *behind you*. Yet you have assured this company you did not go near the dipping machine."

He stared into his mirror like a pig poison'd, for he could see, reflected in mine, the stripes of bayberry wax on the back of his red head.

Then his freckled face became hard and calm, and he turn'd to me. He stood very tall for such a short man. He stared upward through me as tho' I were a mist. And, without apology or complaint, he sternly said: "I did my best to feed my family."

Following his uplifted gaze, I, too, stared at the row of young Lowthers upon the staircase, and I need not describe their uncomprehending and distraught expressions.

Like Icarus of mythology, I felt my triumph lose its wings.

The mob was sufficiently amazed by my deductions, and so sober'd that Warwick Lowther was allow'd to be hang'd by the proper authorities, which doleful event I did not attend. It cost me much unrest and some of my books, which I sold to give help to the widow; and I ponder'd that a fund ought to be set up, offering loans to those displaced artisans who, tho' showing capability and industriousness, need a respite from starvation in which to establish themselves. In later years I was able to arrange such a fund for Philadelphia.

As for my return from the crowded candle shop, it was greeted by my brother James's unreasonable fist. He set me to useless labours till midnight . . . My now well known aversion to arbitrary power, which a lifetime of public service has express'd, stems from my brother's tyrannical treatment of me.

Bitterly upon my knees, I scrubb'd the press while, beyond the flickering candles, glowering and smiling, James composed much satire against the authorities. As a result, he was taken up and imprison'd for a month. His discharge was accompanied by an order of the House that he "should no longer print the paper call'd the *New England Courant*."

My brother's means of evading this order produced my own means of escape; for he return'd my apprenticeship indenture to me so that his paper might be printed for the future, as indeed for a time it was, under my own name, Benjamin Franklin.

AUTHOR'S POSTSCRIPT: *The fictional adventure you have just read has its source in the early part of Benjamin Franklin's* AUTOBIOGRAPHY *(the Bigelow version). Remember that these events were supposed to have occurred in the America of 1722, which was a very different kettle of fish from, let us say, 1776, just before the Revolutionary War. The chief problems in 1722 were not with the British; they were with the French and Indians, they were the rivalries among the colonies themselves,*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and they arose from the ideological struggle between weakening Puritan theocracy. (Cotton Mather did not die until 1728) and such "insidious European doctrines" as rationalism and scientific method. Complete independence from England was utterly inconceivable in 1722. The bonds tying the colonies and England were so close at that time that travel to England, for example, was as common as to the other colonies — and hardly more inconvenient!

EDITORS' POSTSCRIPT: *There is no doubt of it: had Benjamin Franklin turned his mind to it, he could have been the forerunner of what we now call a detective — and if he had turned his pen to it, he might have anticipated Edgar Allan Poe's invention of the modern detective story. Benjamin Franklin was no mean inventor, you know!*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Invites you to enter its Tenth

$7,500 SHORT STORY CONTEST

(again with the cooperation of Little, Brown & Co., of Boston)

First Prize $1500

SPECIAL AWARD OF MERIT, $1000

Nine Second Prizes, $500 each **Best "First" Story, $500**

FOR the tenth consecutive year EQMM offers big cash prizes for top-flight original stories of detection or crime. As usual, awards will be made solely on the basis of merit—that is, quality of writing and originality of plot. The contest is open to everyone except employees of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Mercury Publications, Inc., and their families. Stories are solicited from amateur as well as professional writers; from old-timers as well as beginners—a special prize of $500 is offered for the best "first" story. All will have an equal chance to win the prizes.

Complete rules may be obtained by writing to Contest Editor, EQMM, 471 Park Ave., N. Y. 22, N. Y.

» *You don't need to buy Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine to enter the contest. But if you want it, and should find your newsdealer sold out, use this convenient coupon.*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine Q-Oct-4
471 Park Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.
Enter my subscription for one year (12 issues).
☐ I enclose $4. ☐ Please bill me.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ Zone_____ State_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

:ontinued from back cover

Yes! YOU GET $15.00 WORTH OF MYSTERIES AT ONCE — *FREE!*

Including These Very Latest Smash Hits of

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

[MAGINE GETTING $15 worth of brand-new mysteries right away — FREE! Full-length hard-bound books by "champion" mystery authors. SIX great books in all — THREE of them by the "undisputed king of mystery writers," Erle Stanley Gardner! ANOTHER by the great Mary Roberts Rinehart! ANOTHER by that cracker-jack writer Mignon Eberhart! ANOTHER by that expert baffler, Stuart Palmer! You get *six new* books that would actually cost you a total of $15 if you bought them — but now they're yours FREE!

Why do we make such a liberal offer? Simply to introduce you to the many advantages of membership in the famous Detective Book Club—the only Club that brings you the very latest NEW mysteries *at one third the usual cost!*

The Cream of the Best NEW Mysteries

Out of the 300 or more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very "cream of the crop"—by top-notch authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, Stuart Palmer, Manning Coles, Mignon Eberhart, Anthony Gilbert, and Leslie Ford. ALL THESE, and many *other* famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many of them are members of the Club themselves!

Club selections are ALL newly published books. As a member, you get THREE of them *complete* in one handsome volume (a $6.00 to $7.50 value) for only $1.89.

You Take ONLY The Books You Want

You do NOT have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's "Preview", which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume in advance. You need NOT take any specific number of books — only the ones you want. NO money in advance; NO membership fees. You may cancel membership any time you please.

You Enjoy These Five Advantages

(1) You get the cream of the finest BRAND-NEW detective books — by the best authors. (2) You save TWO THIRDS the usual cost. (3) You take ONLY the books you want. (4) The volumes are fresh and clean — delivered right to your door. (5) They are so well printed and bound that they grow into a library you'll be proud to own.

Mail Postcard for Six FREE Books

SEND NO MONEY. Simply mail postcard promptly, and we will send you at once — FREE — the six complete mystery thrillers, described here, together with the current triple-volume containing three other complete new detective books. But this exceptional offer may never be repeated. So don't risk disappointment. Clip the postcard now, and mail it to:

DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I., N. Y.

ALL SIX BOOKS FREE

SEND NO MONEY—JUST MAIL POSTCARD

43

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR SIX FREE BOOKS

NO POSTAGE NEEDED

Walter J. Black, President MU
DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I., New York

Please enroll me as a member and send me FREE, in regular publisher's editions, the SIX new full-length mystery novels pictured on this page. In addition send me the current triple-volume, which contains three complete detective books.

I am not obligated to take any specific number of volumes. I am to receive an advance description of all forthcoming selections and I may reject any book before or after I receive it. I may cancel membership whenever I wish.

I need send no money now, but for each volume I decide to keep I will send you only $1.89 plus a few cents mailing charges as complete payment within one week after I receive it. (*Books shipped in U. S. A. only.*)

Mr. }
Mrs. } .....
Miss }
(PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY)

Address.....

City..... Zone No. (if any)..... State.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Free— All Six of these Thrill-Packed Mysteries!

Including These Very Latest Smash Hits of
ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

JUST MAIL COUPON TO GET THESE SIX GREAT NEW MYSTERIES FREE—AT ONCE!

① THE CASE OF THE RUNAWAY CORPSE
By Erle Stanley Gardner

Myrna hires Perry Mason to get a letter saying she plans to poison her husband Ed. (Ed has just died of *poisoning!*) All Perry finds is—*blank* paper!

② THE CASE OF THE FUGITIVE NURSE
By Erle Stanley Gardner

Perry Mason sneaks into an apartment; finds an *empty* safe. Not sinister . . . . EXCEPT that the TENANT had already been found MURDERED!

③ THE CASE OF THE GREEN-EYED SISTER
By Erle Stanley Gardner

Mason's client wants to get back damaging evidence against a Mr. Fritch. Then Fritch is killed. Mason and client *need* an alibi—but don't have one!

④ MAN MISSING
By Mignon G. Eberhart

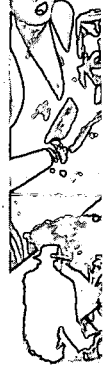
Sarah noticed odd things at the hospital. And then—the too-still figure on Lieutenant Parly's bed. *A MAN DEAD FOR 3 YEARS!*

⑤ THE FRIGHTENED WIFE
By Mary Roberts Rinehart

Anne kept her earnings secret; afraid Fred would kill her. Then she lay dying of a bullet—with Fred beside her, *dead!* (One of 4 mysteries in book.)

⑥ COLD POISON
By Stuart Palmer

Four people get threats. 3 are *scared stiff*. The 4th is just STIFF! "Accident," says coroner. But Miss Withers says MURDER. Her only clue is *a missing finger!*



FIRST CLASS PERMIT No. 47
(Sec. 34.9, P.L.&R.)
Roslyn, N.Y.

BUSINESS REPLY CARD
No Postage Stamp Necessary If Mailed in the United States

4¢ POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY
DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
ROSLYN, L. I.
NEW YORK

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS SENSATION OFFER!

MAIL POSTCARD AT ONCE

continued on inside cover

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED